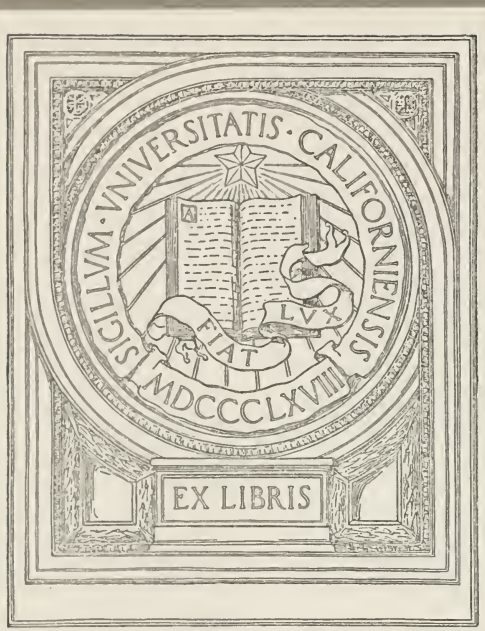
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THE
WAVERLEY NOVELS

An Appreciation

BY
CHARLES ALEXANDER YOUNG

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PREFACE

Charles Alexander Young, the author of this Appreciation, was born on New-Year's Day, 1880, and perished in the earthquake of April, 1905, at Dharmsala, India. He was educated at the High School of Stirling and the University of Glasgow, and for both school and college he had a very loyal affection. On leaving Glasgow he spent a year in London "cramming" for the Indian Civil Service examination, in which he obtained second place, and this was followed by a year's residence at Christ Church, Oxford, where, as at Glasgow, he made many true friends. This book was written in the summer of 1901 for the Honours Degree in English Literature and History, but far from being a task, much love was given to the labour of writing it.

The choice of subject was no random one. This appreciation is but one of a long series

of literary excursions dating from childhood. The first, it is worthy of note, was *Malcolm Douglas*, a romance written in a round childish hand in loving imitation of *Ivanhoe* and the *Lady of the Lake*. The Waverley Novels opened the way to the great country of Bookland, and Charles Young travelled far and wide within its ample borders through a vastly varied landscape, as these Essays show, but always with kindly recollections of the chivalrous writer whom he had first met in the enchanted land. The feverish hurry of the Scottish University sessions is followed by long tranquil vacations, and these were spent in reading or writing at home or in ever-to-be-remembered holidays in the Highlands. One Easter Holiday was spent in a walking tour through the valleys of Tweed and Yarrow. It was during these vacations that he made many of his literary *essais*, including "The Waverley Novels."

Two reasons have had weight in determining the publication of this book. It is thought worthy of publication as a criticism filled with insight into these qualities of manliness and

greatness of heart which Sir Walter Scott possessed, and which give their most abiding charm to the Waverley Novels. Secondly, there are many friends, and Charles Young had indeed a genius for friendship, to whom this book will be precious as a memory of their chivalrous, enthusiastic comrade. For such no words are needed telling them of the charm and real worth of their dead friend, nor had they any doubt but that Charles Young was made for great achievements. But for the world at large—

> "Thy leaf has perished in the green,
> And, while we breathe beneath the sun,
> The world which credits what is done,
> Is cold to all that might have been."

On page 22 we read: "In 1810 there was a strong probability that Scott would go to India as a judge. These changes might not have checked his literary production, and after all the impulse to write was the strongest impulse of his life. But had he gone to India or to the West Indies he would not in all probability have written the Scotch Novels." Of

Charles Young, too, it may be said : "After all, the impulse to write was the strongest impulse of his life," but, alas, he did join the Indian Civil Service and sailed for India in October, 1903. For eighteen months there came long letters vivid with descriptions of foreign places or of new friends and telling of the glamour of the East. Sometimes they were sad, sometimes mere mirth and madness. Then there came earthquake stilling the rapid pen and the fertile brain. Now there is silence.

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CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF A NOVELIST

"The noble hart that harbours vertuous thought
And is with child of glorious great intent,
Can never rest until it forth have brought
The eternall brood of glorie excellent."

Spenser.

"'I am Imagynityf,' quod he, 'idel was I never.'"

Langland.

In one of his most characteristic essays, Robert Louis Stevenson traces, in fanciful fashion, the ancestral elements which went to the making of himself, and tells how he was present in old Scotland at many a scene of peace and war, from the days in which he tended the beard of Cardinal Beaton to those in which he sailed with Scott amid the Hebrides, or lit the first beacon on the Bell Rock. Had Walter Scott been so minded, he might have traced his ancestral adventures with even greater vividness and fidelity. For when the Scotts of Harden gathered round the banner of Buccleuch or rode many a midnight foray against their neighbours over the Border; when

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Auld Wat wedded the Flower of Yarrow; when his son chose Meikle Mou'ed Meg rather than the gallows; when Beardie lost his land but kept his beard; when Robert Scott invested his entire capital (borrowed too) in a mettled hunter; when the elder Walter Scott followed in Edinburgh the profession of a Writer to the Signet—a Novelist was in the making. Most men owe their natural being to their forbears; not many owe to them their intellectual bias and literary temperament. But Scott's literary debt to his ancestors was enormous, though he perhaps repaid it with interest by many a tribute in prose and verse. Sprung from a race nurtured within the walls of Border peels, and trained in raids on mountain and moor, reared in the traditions of a family to whom war and adventure had been as the very breath of their nostrils, feeling within himself stir of the old warrior blood, impulse of the old adventurous spirit, charm of the legendary Border Hills, it was Scott's peculiar privilege to tell in song and romance and legend what had been the life, what the aspirations, what the poetry of a people who hitherto, apart from the anonymous ballad-writers, had lacked their singer. Scott owed to his ancestors another debt, of no less account. Critics admit that, in his writings, the men and women of history are not mere names,

but living beings of flesh and blood. One deep source of this historic imagination lies in the life of his forefathers. Many of them were known to history, and of few things was Scott more proud. But then these very men and women were also the chief characters in intimate story and family legend, often humorous, often familiar, presenting them as very living people indeed. How it must have stirred the heart of the future Quarter-Master of Light Horse to hear of William Boltfoot, the lame ancestor who yet became a mighty warrior! It was no influence of friend or writer, no philosophic conviction, which taught Walter Scott his way of looking at the past. It came to him with his blood, as part of his inheritance. For him the Border wastes were peopled, its peels re-roofed, its raids re-ridden, long before the days of childhood were over.

Walter Scott was born at Edinburgh in 1771. Time and place were alike important for the future Scottish novelist. It was only a few years since the Bute administration had roused in England such an outburst of angry feeling against the Scots that all the healing influences of the Seven Years' War had passed away, and Scotland had been thrown back upon herself in proud and angry isolation. Historians are agreed that the first

decade of Scott's life saw the widest severance of the two peoples in the latter half of the 18th century, and point out that during those years was formed the new Scottish Tory Party, the party with which Scott was afterwards connected. "From this decade date most of the characteristic features of the national type," writes the latest historian of the period (Craik, "A Century of Scottish History," vol. ii.). Scott was at this time a mere child; still it is interesting to note what was then the character of the national spirit. Again, the Edinburgh of his young days was an admirable training-ground. The city, no longer pent within its steepy limits, was beginning to fling its white arms to the sea, and to present that combination of past and present which is its peculiar charm. When Scott was a boy the change was merely in progress; ancient habit still held sway, and the old town was still the centre of Scottish life. Here were the great law-courts, where pled a race of lawyers unsurpassed in idiosyncrasy of character and speech; here the country gentlemen still had their high and narrow town houses; here noble and caddie, delicate lady and fishwife, farmer and merchant, still mingled on the steep causeways, so that the streets of Edinburgh provided a panorama of almost every feature of Scottish life. To have spent his

youth in such a city was no small boon to the future author of "Guy Mannering" and "Redgauntlet."

It would be impertinent to relate at length the life of the novelist up till the year of the publication of "Waverley." What is of value is to trace, in the pre-Waverley years, the future novelist in the making. Scott's life, of course, is all of a piece; the lawyer, the country gentleman, the officer of light horse, the poet, the novelist—all are but manifestations of one and the same man. Still it is possible to abstract from the detail of a very full and busy youth and manhood the distinctive features of the poet and novelist. Here, apart from Lockhart, great help is given by the fragment of autobiography, by passages in the novels, and by random reminiscences in the journal. The Autobiographical fragment has this peculiar interest: it was written in 1808, six years before "Waverley" was published, and, though revised and annotated in 1826, nothing was added of any importance. Yet even this small history shows signs of what was to be hereafter. Here is an account of the youth of a novelist by one who did not know what was to be his main business in life. All Scott's history is but the tale of his unconscious drifting into what was to be his real occupation, but there is

no more piquant illustration of his unconsciousness than this fragment.

The shaping power of his childhood must be briefly related. He was a delicate child, and his first years were spent at his grandfather's farm of Sandyknowe. Here his mind drank its first draughts from those sources which were ever afterwards to be the springs of his imaginative life. By his grandfather and the neighbours, by his grandmother, whose mind seems to have been a treasury of Border story, and by his aunt, who possessed considerable knowledge of literature, his earliest literary and historical tastes were formed. Here he became inspired with that sentiment of Jacobitism which produced the most touching passages in "Waverley" and "Redgauntlet"; here Border tale and ballad took the place of the usual nursery rhyme and fairy tale. The passage in "Marmion" relating the impressions of those days is well known, but no biographer seems to have noted how much of Scott's own history is contained in the account which Frank Osbaldistone gives of his nurse's tales of the Border ("Rob Roy," vol. i. p. 51).[1] Old Mabel is an Englishwoman, and tells her tales from the English point of view. But otherwise the infancy described is Scott's own, and it was his own youth-

[1] The references throughout are to Constable's Reprint of the Novels in 48 volumes.

ful mind which was fed upon the rhymes of the North Country and the tales of the Black Douglas and Wat the Devil. Sandyknowe seems also to be the source of another feature of his later work. There he learned to love and cherished in his memory the old-fashioned country life of southern Scotland which is described in "Guy Mannering" and "The Black Dwarf" and "The Monastery."

His schooldays at Edinburgh require little examination: are they not recorded in the letters of Alan Fairford and Darsie Latimer? His own recollections and those of others fortunately reveal very characteristic traits. For exact scholarship he showed little taste, but he won praise for his appreciation of the meaning of the classic writers, and even tried his hand, now and then, at a poetic version. In Edinburgh school-life street fights were then very common; indeed, Borrow's "Lavengro" is a witness that they remained so until far into the next century. Down to the days of his quarrel with Gourgand, Scott was always eager for a fight, and his prominence in these "bickers," recalled in "Redgauntlet" and in the Greenbreeks episode of the General Introduction, need cause no surprise. For the rest, it is remarkable that his chief fame at school was derived from his power of story-telling, with which he charmed his companions in the yards. All this

time, too, he was reading in that desultory fashion which gave him such a wide knowledge of general literature. He himself selects three books for special mention as the favourites of his school-time—Shakespeare, Ossian, Spenser. No better intellectual food could have nurtured the great master of romance.

His short attendance at college classes before entering his father's office had little effect upon his after-life. It may be noticed, however, that as he did not attend the Greek class he soon forgot what little Greek he knew. It may not be unimportant to note that the great romantic, so careless of form, had no direct acquaintance with the masters of art in literature. More important were two illnesses from which Scott suffered at this time, at the close of his school-days and during his brief attendance at the Arts Classes. To recruit his health after the former illness he was sent to Kelso, a visit which he often repeated, and thus was renewed the connection with the Border country. He traces much to these visits. At Kelso he read Latin authors with the schoolmaster; whatever exact classical scholarship he possessed dated from this time. Here he read Percy's "Reliques," his first introduction to the ballads as literature; and here, too, natural scenery first charmed his eye, but derived its chief

charm, as was always the case with Scott, from its association of beauty and legend. During his second illness he was confined to his room at Edinburgh and forbidden to speak or exert himself in any way. Turning to reading as his chief resource, he was able to add still greater treasures to the storehouse of his mind.

Henceforward, for some years, the outward course of his life seemed to be that of an ordinary young Scots lawyer, with little promise of future poet or novelist. In 1786 he became an apprentice to his father; in 1788, probably because his ambition was fired by the new friends he made in the Civil Law Class of that year, he began to study for the Scottish Bar. He was called to the Bar in 1792, and there, until he was appointed Sheriff-Substitute of Selkirk in 1799, his chief hopes lay. The outward show of these years is commonplace enough; but whoever looks beneath the surface to his reading, his thoughts, his pursuits, will see clearly the novelist in training. Indeed, when later writers are remembered, one might almost draw up a prescription for the making of a Scots man of letters. He must be born in Edinburgh, be afflicted in infancy and youth with ill-health, attend Arts Classes in a very desultory fashion, have a particular antipathy to the class of Greek, and a peculiar genius for

the truant's wandering. He must be bred to the Scottish Bar, yet his love for law must decrease on further acquaintance, and end, for the most part, in a keen appreciation of its humours. The external business of his life must never find an abiding place in the inner sanctuary of his soul, where shall dwell love of books and love of adventure, and slowly, consciously or unconsciously, he must be drawn from the entangling circumstance of business to the more or less imperative pursuit of literature. And yet, many might follow the prescription and never attain to a moiety of the genius of Walter Scott or Robert Louis Stevenson.

Tracing the influences which form a writer's character, one naturally asks what books he read. For Scott's early studies one has but to turn to the opening of "Waverley"—Shakespeare, Milton, Drayton, Spenser; the romantic literature of Italy; English and Scottish Chronicles; memoirs and romances of old France—Edward Waverley was not the only student of those writers. Nor are Waverley's reveries, which peopled the library with figures of the past, less autobiographical. In December, 1825, Scott writes in the Journal:—"Since I was five years old I cannot remember the time when I had not some ideal part to play for my own solitary amusement." The effect of

such reading upon the young heir of Waverley-Honour is described as no unmixed good; readers will remember how the youth suffered from a temporary attack of Quixotism. But as early as his college days, Scott's sound sense asserted itself, and even in the course of an illness he was glad to turn from pure romance to history, chronicle, and book of travels. He is probably the most industrious idler on record. Spanish, French, Italian, German he never learned as a scholar learns; but he could read the literature of these languages with considerable ease, and his first literary attempts show that he was in fact no mean German student. One fact characterises his reading at every period of his life; it was always wide and desultory—Lockhart gives some idea of the contents of his note-books for 1792, the year of his calling to the Bar. His studies at this time comprised Anglo-Saxon and Middle-English literature and language, Teutonic alphabets, Norse translation, odd facts in history such as the pecuniary distress of Charles I., the discovery of ballads, the second sight, and original poetry. What other youthful advocate who passed his trials in that year had a mind so filled with curious knowledge? Of a truth it was not Law only whose call Scott was hearing in 1792.

The pursuits and recreations of the apprentice

and advocate were also part of his training. He roamed the country with his fellow students and fellow apprentices, and mostly on foot, for Saunders Fairford, as Alan was to recall later, was no believer in a large allowance of pocket-money. How much his descriptions of Scottish manners owe to these travels on foot one can never fully know. They must have supplied him with much material for the future; for to the country people of Scotland a pedestrian is one of themselves, and their intercourse, information, and hospitality are always at his disposal. Further afield, however, Scott had to journey on horseback. It was in this fashion, in pursuit of his legal duties, that he first entered the Perthshire Highlands, a district to which his friendship with many country gentlemen, notably Buchanan of Cambusmore and Ramsay of Ochtertyre, often led him to return. His lameness, then as afterwards, did not prevent him from engaging in difficult adventures and perilous sports. The spirit of these times is perhaps best expressed in a passage of the Journal for March, 1827: "There is a touch of the old spirit in me yet that bids me brave the tempest—the spirit that, in spite of manifold infirmities, made me a roaring boy in my youth, a desperate climber, a bold rider, a deep drinker and a stout player at single-stick." While such were his pursuits

abroad, at home he was no less actively employed. Apart from real hard work devoted to law studies, he entered into the debating societies for which Edinburgh has always been noted; and here his chosen subjects—Northern antiquities, Ossian, the feudal system—were characteristic. Wild conviviality of the nature of the 'high jinks' in "Guy Mannering" was then the fashion among Edinburgh youth, and 'Colonel Grogg' was always ready for any gay revel—to sail with the Clerks in their lugger and lay the foundation of the sea-knowledge displayed in "The Pirate," to gain at Boyle's, Fortune's, and Walker's his intimate acquaintance with tavern life, or to drink delight of battle in street-fight or play-house riot.

Scott's writings show no trace of any disposition towards vice; the ideals of the writer are always high and honourable. The same high and honourable ideals governed his early days, for, in the midst of the manifold and boisterous pursuits of youth, a delicate influence refined his spirit and touched it to finer issues. In 1790 he fell in love with Miss Stuart Belches and loved her ever afterwards as few men have loved. This love-affair, ultimately unsuccessful, has been much discussed; lately, so far have literary ideas travelled from the silence of Scott and the reticence

of Lockhart, a book has been written upon it. It is wise, for the present purpose, to note only its effect upon his literary development. The absorption in the love of one woman just at the time when ideals are formed, the ideal grace which loss and sorrow would throw round such a one, the indifference to other types of womanhood—this youthful experience must have moulded the author's conception of woman as heroine, a being removed from the contagion and stress of common life. His love-affair, however, stimulated his production of original lyric poetry; it was the immediate cause of his first appearance in print; it inspired some of the best passages in his longer poems, and flung a tender melancholy round many scenes in the novels. His lost love lives again in "Redgauntlet" as the Lady of the Green Mantle, and such unfortunate early love gives pathos to the character of Jonathan Oldbuck. Personal experience must have led Scott to sympathise with Tressilian in such a passage as this: "Nothing is perhaps more dangerous to the future happiness of men of deep thought and retired habits, than the entertaining an early, long, and unfortunate attachment. It frequently sinks so deep into the mind, that it becomes their dream by night and their vision by day—mixes itself with every source of interest and enjoyment; and

when blighted and withered by final disappointment, it seems as if the springs of the heart were dried up along with it" ("Kenilworth," vol. ii. p. 162). His sound sense, his wide interests, his brave spirit of revolt against circumstance, saved Scott from the dangers he himself describes. But the most touching words in the Journal show how deep, too deep for healing, was the wound.

Men are not made by private pursuits or personal experience alone. The society in which one lives, the spirit of one's nation, also mould the mind. Scott had equal good fortune here. The Edinburgh of his early youth, like the Edinburgh of his childhood, was still a medley of old and new, where old ladies professed Jacobitism, where the law-lords talked broad Scots, and where country gentlemen displayed, in the drawing-rooms of the New Town, the manners of former days. Writing of Scotland under Pitt, before the French Revolution, Sir Henry Craik says: "It is hard to conceive an atmosphere more inspiring for the generation then growing up. The fashions of a byegone age had not passed away, but they were held with the genial ease of those who thought them indisputable and knew them unassailed. There was but little of angry contention where all were practically of one mind. The range of society was large enough to embrace

many varieties, and yet small enough to admit pursuit of the unrestrained freedom of social intercourse, where each man was known with all his idiosyncrasies and foibles." It is true that the last decade of the century brought about many changes, hastened the dissolution of the old organisation of country life, divided public men into two warring parties. Yet again the same historian notes that these years witnessed the most enthusiastic study of Scottish antiquities, literature, and ballads, for "this very generation which saw the older types undergoing disintegration became the most careful to mark them, and the most sedulous to preserve their memory." It is little wonder that from such a soil sprung Scotland's greatest man of letters.

Here, perhaps, is the proper place to note Scott's attitude to the French Revolution. All know how it arose like a new dawn upon the imaginative horizon of many of his young contemporaries in England. The novel, among other forms of literature, received a new stimulus and became a vehicle for revolutionary doctrines. From the first, however, Scott bitterly opposed the Revolution. The most he ever admitted (and he did so in "The Antiquary") was that there were some sound Constitutional Whigs in the Constituent Assembly. Afterwards, when his political phil-

osophy is discussed, it will be seen how natural was his opposition, how opposed were the Revolutionary doctrines to all his ideals of society. But it was a real loss not to have felt the generous impulses of that enthusiastic time and never to have appreciated the true greatness of the movement. Many excuses—training, environment, friends—may be urged; Sir Henry Craik states that in Scotland, after the Revolution, "to proclaim oneself an adherent of reform was now to assume a character of reckless political profligacy." Still it is to be remarked, not without blame, that while Coleridge and Southey were being fired with new love for mankind and dreaming of an ideal republic on the Susquehanna, Scott was leading an anti-Jacobin riot in the Edinburgh theatre. More satisfactory, of greater effect upon his literary development, was his public action in later years of the war. As the struggle went on, it assumed, more and more, a national aspect; it became, more and more, a contest with an ambitious despot. Hence it appealed not merely to blind opposition to change or to national prejudice, but to generous ideas and patriotic pride. It is well known how much Scott's poetry was indebted to the war. For the training of a novelist it was more important that Scott took a leading part in the formation and

service of the Edinburgh Light Horse. Few chapters in the novels are more inspiriting than those which tell of the pomp of war, the delight of battle, the stir of the charge—the onset at Drumclog, the siege of Torquilstone, the fight on the North Inch. To write vividly of such scenes was little trouble to the old Quartermaster of Horse, who had made many a march and taken part in many a manœuvre in the years when invasion threatened our coasts. Nor was it unimportant that he who was to write of historical personages and events should have lived through such a crisis in his country's history.

By the time of the enrolment of the Light Horse, Scott had made his first appearance in print as the translator of "Lenore." Whoever treats of Scott's early days must note his lateness in writing; it was not till 1796 that he printed any poetry, while "Waverley" did not appear till 1814. But his biography, the reminiscences of friends, his own novels, show that he suffered, quite as much as other men more conscious of their vocation, from the glorious great intent within him, struggling to be free. His friend, Irving, tells how, at college and in the office, he continued the story-telling habits of his boyhood, and how he spent spare afternoons on the crags of Arthur's seat, weaving endless romances of

chivalry. The critic may even note, with a smile, the young story-teller's chief trouble: he could not finish his tale. The Autobiography tells what a master he was, even then, in the art of narration. "In crossing Magus Moor, near St. Andrews, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep." At this time, too, we hear of a poem "Guiscard and Matilda," and of another, "The Conquest of Granada." It is customary to say that Scott pictures his own youth in Alan Fairford. Unquestionably this is very true in some ways. But Scott seems to have omitted the literary side of his nature. Why is it only Darsie Latimer who incurs the censure of old Fairford for "scouring the country like a land-louper"? And O, why does Alan dislike Ariosto? For the distraction and vexation Scott must have suffered when Law pulled one way and Poetry another, one must look in the early pages of "Rob Roy." Every reader will remember the discomfiture of poor Frank when his father discovers, from the unfortunate verses on the Black Prince, that his son was a greater blockhead than he supposed. There is much autobiography in the

early part of this novel. Scott was never so averse to business as he makes out his young hero to be; he had a very strong desire to please his father, and, for a time, some real liking for law. But his father was quite as contemptuous of literature as the senior partner of Osbaldistone and Tresham, while young Scott was quite as devoted to Ariosto and probably almost as much given to day-dreaming as young Frank. Indeed, critics seem to ignore the latter side of Scott's character—his poetic sensibility, his surrender to rapt imaginings, his perpetual dwelling in the ideal world. Some would make him out to be a level-headed Scotsman, who stood very firmly upon this earth. This is to give only a partial representation. Stoic that he was, Scott always hid the imaginative side of his life. But the Journal again comes to the rescue, and from it we learn his youthful love of solitude and self-communion, and how, from the first, "my life, though not without its fits of waking and strong exertion, has been a sort of dream, spent in

'Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.'"

Such being his innermost nature, such the subjects to which his secret thoughts were drawn, the lateness of his literary birth is all the more surprising, while it is no less strange that he should

not have found his proper literary medium until late in life. Of his lateness in appearing as an author, many explanations have been sought. Professor Saintsbury ("Sir Walter Scott." Famous Scots Series) sums up the various arguments under three heads. There was paternal discouragement. While a young man he had no need to earn money by writing at a time when writing was wretchedly paid. Finally, the new age of romantic poetry had not yet begun. Without question, these were all retarding influences, but perhaps the chief explanation is to be found in Scott's constant attitude to literature. It is one of the blemishes of a singularly noble artist that he did not sufficiently respect and honour his art. Literature he was, in a way, ashamed of, and if she brought him not only his greatest joy, but also his greatest sorrow, it seems but the righteous retribution of a mistress he had loved but not respected. He would appear the man of letters only in his leisure hours or in the solitude of his study; to the world he preferred to appear in some other character—the advocate, the Clerk of Session, or the country gentleman. In youth he was thus, for a time, really ambitious of success at the Bar, and not quite in earnest in his literary aspirations; and as late as 1803 Wordsworth's impression of Scott was "that on the whole he attached much less

importance to his literary labours or reputation than to his bodily sports, exercises, and social amusements." One has always the suspicion that he might not have become a novelist at all. He might certainly never have become a *Scots* novelist. Lovers of Burns will note with interest that in the year of his marriage Scott meditated emigration to the West Indies. In 1810 there was a strong probability that he would go to India as a judge. These changes might not have checked his literary production; he had hopes that a sojourn in India would give him new material for poetry, and, after all, the impulse to write was the strongest impulse of his life. But had he gone to the West Indies or to India, he would not, in all likelihood, have written the Scotch novels.

Why he was so late in coming into his own kingdom is perhaps easier to explain. In the first place, during his early manhood the novel had fallen into disrepute, and was associated with the discredited Minerva Press. In the second place, Scott was a poet, and poetry comes before prose both in national and individual lives. His romantic dreams, his fiery chivalry, were what first sought expression, and they found their natural vehicle in verse. But it was not only Byron's popularity which led Scott to abandon

narrative poetry. His verse expressed but one side of his nature. To utter his whole criticism of life he had to seek another medium, and he found it in the novel.

Scott's early romantic poetry will find mention in another chapter; the novelist in making is better seen in two other sections of the pre-Waverley compositions. In some ways the Border Minstrelsy is even more important than the narrative poems. The collecting of material gave him the opportunity of becoming acquainted with all sorts and conditions of men, every variety of scene and custom, in what were still the fastnesses of southern Scotland, for from 1792 to 1797 Scott made annual raids into Liddesdale. His companion, Mr. Shortreed, has summed up, in an historic phrase, what all this was to mean to him: "He was makin' himsell a' the time." The ballads owed much to these rambles, but the novels owed more. There could have been no better training than the editing of the Minstrelsy. The preface and notes were not only his first efforts at sustained narrative in prose; in them he first found an opportunity of displaying his legendary lore, his vast historical knowledge, his acquaintance with the rich circumstance and detail of life. Moreover, to edit well such a collection of poems was the fittest task which could have been set a

future historical novelist. The ballads had all a story to tell, and many of their stories were of the past. In collating the different versions the editor's critical faculties were put to the test; he had to select the form which had the fewest faults, in which the main action was most effectively developed, incident duly subordinated, and character best unfolded. As for the ballads' picture of the past, of no literature could the spirit have been more congenial to Scott. For the past of the ballad-writers is the past of the Waverley Novels. The heroes of the poems are described as they lived, with the helmets and jack-boots they wore, and the number of buttons on their sleeves; we see them 'birling at the wine,' following the fallow deer, swimming the ford in the 'wan water' or tirling at the pin of their lady's bower. The pathos, the chivalry, the adventure of old times are all there, finely expressed. But humour is also permitted. "Kinmont Willie" is a huge practical joke in the heroic vein, none the less humorous that the background is serious, and the stories of Jamie Telfer and of the Blind Harper are told with delightful irony. Incidents of the most romantic description, strange figures from Fairyland or the grim under-world, often interrupt the story, which has always, however, a background of historical fact, or solid, everyday

country life. The same combination was to characterise the Waverley Novels.

The long narrative poems have many of the qualities of the prose romances. They have the same power of telling a story; nay, interweaving the fortunes of private individuals with public events, they even tell a story in the same way. The fortunes of the lovers both in "The Lady of the Lake" and in "Waverley" are involved in the course of public affairs, and neither in poem nor romance is the love affair the reader's chief interest. But, after all, Hutton ("Scott." English Men of Letters Series) is right in declaring that the Border Minstrelsy is "more commensurate in range" with Scott's genius than the long narrative poems. In the latter his humour, his command of dialect, his interest in contemporary affairs, his power of painting manners, present or past, could not be fully developed. "The Lady of the Lake" is a poem perfectly charming in its kind. But how different would have been the story of Ellen Douglas had it been the subject of a prose romance! Alongside nobler features the ludicrous aspect of the clan system would have been developed, life in the island would have been elaborated in full detail, minor characters among the Highlanders would have been more than mere names, the heir of Armandave's love-story would

have been told at length, the reader would have shared the hospitality of some worthy Stirling burgher, and heard his opinion on the King's treatment of Douglas, and the old Broad Street would have been alive again, with its motley crowd, unseemly jest, and insolent behaviour. Scott nowhere shows consciousness of his limitations in verse, though his turning to the novel really proves his need of a new medium. But even in the poems he seeks fuller expression. The introduction to the cantos of "Marmion" may or may not be out of place; they at least show how the poet already felt that narrative romantic poetry did not contain all that he had to say on life. There is a trace of the same struggle for freedom in the introductions to "The Bridal" and "Harold the Dauntless," though Scott is here at his old trick of deceiving the critics and is scarcely serious. But the Epistolary Introductions in "Marmion" reveal, in charming fashion, the Scott who hated Napoleon and all his works, the conscious defender of romanticism against the older 'classical' taste, the lover of country sports and ancient manners and old recollections and everyday life—the tenant of Ashiestiel, and Sheriff of Selkirk. Some day he would speak out more clearly.

The beginning and end of the nineteenth

century have each known a great master of Scottish letters. It is interesting to reflect that when Stevenson was laid in his grave, under the wide and starry sky, his work completed, he was only in his forty-fifth year, while within two years of that age Scott had still his chief work to do. In 1814 Scott's life must have appeared, both to his friends and to the general public, to have settled down in the channel in which it was henceforth to flow. He would remain Sheriff of Selkirk and Clerk of Session; he would increase his possessions as a landed proprietor; he would probably continue to write charming poetry and to edit, with ability and labour, the works of former authors. The general drift of his life seemed evident to all. But deep down there were two secret currents affecting the main stream. One was hidden from his friends and the public; the other he scarcely suspected himself. Already the secret Ballantyne connection had almost ruined Scott, and the hope of opening up a new vein of gold in the money market may have been one of the influences which turned him to novel-writing. But the destiny we call chance was the chief influence. Had he never found the lost chapters in the old cabinet, had his friends' criticism been again unfavourable, the Waverley Novels might never have seen the light. There

is a mystery which veils the springs of original composition, and the tides which bear great writers to fame and fortune have often strange turns.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMANCE FROM WALPOLE TO "WAVERLEY"

"Scarce I praise their venturous part
Who tamper with such dangerous art."

Scott.

PROBABLY there are very few habitual novel-readers who ever reflect upon the favourite reading of their ancestors. Only the professed student of literature is acquainted with the tales which charmed the novel-readers of Shakespeare's time, or with the many-volumed romances which wiled away the seemingly interminable leisure of the ladies of the seventeenth century. Indeed, reflection on even the later history of the novel makes us conscious of wide gaps in our knowledge. Theo and Hetty Lambert sighed and wept over Clarissa, while the Colonel chuckled at the adventures of Tom Jones; our grandfathers and grandmothers wandered with Edward Waverley or listened to the sermons of the Reverend Mr.

Collins. But who knows what came between, what the Edinburgh ladies of Scott's youth and manhood used to read?

In the preface to "The Lord of Ennerdale" fragment, appended to the General Introduction, Scott himself describes the favourite reading of a lady at the close of the 18th century. "Lady Ratcliff and her fair daughters had climbed every pass, viewed every pine-shrouded ruin, heard every groan, and lifted every trap-door, in company with the noted heroine of Udolpho. . . . They had valorously mounted *en croupe* behind the ghostly horseman of Prague, through all his seven translators, and followed the footsteps of Moore through the forests of Bohemia. Moreover, it was even hinted (but this was a greater mystery than all the rest) that a certain performance called the 'Monk,' in three neat volumes, had been seen, by a prying eye, in the right-hand drawer of the Indian cabinet of Lady Ratcliff's dressing-room." A critical account of such of this literature as is fiction and English, and of similar contemporary or antecedent fiction, has an interest not of curiosity or sentiment alone. For the revival of romance is seen not only in the poets, but also in the novelists of the declining years of the 18th century literature. The Waverley Novels, too, had forerunners. Impulses long

seeking freedom found there free play; methods formerly tried in tentative fashion were there applied with consummate art. It is the excellence of Scott which obscures his immediate predecessors. What man but the professed student of literature who can read Shakespeare or Fletcher, now reads Green or Peele? There are considerations which make somewhat similar the relation of Scott to Walpole and Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe and Godwin and Jane Porter.

There are novelists and groups of novelists in this transition period with whom we have no concern. Some continued to work on lines which Scott never followed; others employed the novel for purposes alien to his. He could not chatter in the drawing-room with Miss Burney, nor share, at Miss Austen's tea-table, the wittiest small-talk in the world. Once he ventured into the region of tea-cup and card-table, but, like his own Frank Tyrell, he preferred the Cleikum Inn to the new 'hottle,' and the rough wit of Meg Dods to the genteel foolishness of Lady Penelope. To use his own phrase, he could only do "the big Bow-Wow strain." Nor were his novels novels with a purpose, like those of Bage and Holcroft and Godwin. It never crossed his mind to make his art a means of conveying political instruction. Had such a suggestion been offered, he would

probably have replied that the means was unworthy. Of course, now and then his political spleen betrayed itself, as when in "Ivanhoe" he classed a Radical meeting with bull-fights and tournaments, and unconsciously his novels portrayed his ideal society. But he was never a political novelist. The burden of Carlyle's unseemly denunciation of Scott—unseemly, for there a great Scotsman is unjust to a great Scotsman—is that he had no gospel, no message. Presumably he would have had Scott imitate the methods of Bage and Holcroft. It is well that the author, so subject to the influence of friends, had near him no critic with Carlyle's idea of a novel. Otherwise we might have had to seek a political reference in the oaths of Dirk Hatteraick, or to evolve a metaphysical doctrine out of "Wandering Willie's Tale."

What concerns our present purpose is to note that from 1765 to 1814 prose fiction was being produced which bears a certain resemblance to the later work of Scott. In his "Miscellaneous Works" Scott defines a romance as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse, the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents." The writers of fiction from Horace Walpole to Jane Porter would satisfy Scott's definition. They told of drear enchantments in haunted castles, of

wanderings and adventures in strange lands. Like Scott, they laid their scene in the past, in mediæval Scotland or England, in Renaissance France or Italy. Long before the days of Jedidiah Cleishbotham or Lawrence Templeton, they employed the unveiled mystification of Scott's prefaces. Walpole's novel was a translation from the Italian. Clara Reeve worked from a manuscript which at times lacked a page, or was so worm-eaten that it was scarcely decipherable. It is very characteristic of Scott, who employed these honest impostures more than any one, that he made fun of such practices in the Introductory Epistle to "The Monastery."

There is something paradoxical in the position of these minor novelists, in the relation of their personality and work to the kings who were to rule the world of letters hereafter. Horace Walpole, with his cynicism, good sense, honestly expressed hate of the country, and lack of aspiration, seems a typical man of the eighteenth century. But one night he dreams a dream, and when he sets down upon paper the dream and all that it suggests to him, he scares—*mirabile dictu*—the Cambridge Fellows from bed o' nights, and begins in English fiction a new kind of tale—the Tale of Terror. It is strange to think of that periwigged figure in the grey dawn of a new

age first setting his lips to the horn at whose sound fly open the gates of the Castle of Romance; strange, too, that the first suggestion of the tale should come to him in a dream. One day a greater magician will blow the horn and find in the castle a richer treasure, while in dreams a finer romantic spirit will visit fairer regions and feed on honey-dew and the milk of Paradise. Nor do the life and work of Mrs. Radcliffe afford a less piquant contrast. Biography represents her as a domesticated little lady, who was very fond of her husband and was an excellent cook. And yet, apart from the terrifying of her contemporaries, in landscape she is an artificial Wordsworth, and in depicting villainy a milk-and-water Byron.

Walpole, Clara Reeve, Mrs. Radcliffe, Godwin (because he wrote "St. Leon") are sufficiently allied in external purpose to be criticised together. All wrote novels dealing with strange and supernatural incidents, which were feigned to have occurred at more or less definite historical periods. He who looks forward to "Waverley" at once turns to their treatment of history. Walpole is not very sure when the events of his romance took place; he thinks it must have been between 1095 and 1243! The other writers pride themselves on their superior historical knowledge. Clara Reeve lays her 'gothic story' in the days

of Henry VI.'s minority; "The Mysteries of Udolpho" opens in the year 1584, and the sixteenth century witnessed also the adventures of the Count of St. Leon. But Walpole showed his wisdom in professing ignorance. If a novelist selects a particular period, he is expected to adhere, in some degree, to the spirit, manners, history and geography of the time. These writers lacked the knowledge and imagination which the historical novel demands. Walpole has some sense of what is required; his women are modern, but the manners are meant to be ancient, and the atmosphere Italian. The atmosphere of his followers, however, is frankly unhistorical. Mrs. Radcliffe and Godwin give not the slightest indication of the Renaissance spirit; one would think, from their novels, that the Europe of the sixteenth century drew its aesthetic and moral ideas from Rousseau, and its fashions from the Paris of Diderot and D'Alembert. But Clara Reeve, their predecessor, who set out to correct the improbabilities of Horace Walpole, is the chief sinner in historic sense. She is writing of England in the closing stages of the Hundred Years' War, when the nobles were so many wild beasts, at feud with one another. But the old Baron's castle is a modern house, with a drawing-room and parlour, and apartments built on; there is much

talk of airing of beds and mending of fires; the young gentlemen go out riding in the afternoon for the benefit of their health. A 'surgeon of note' attends the duel-like trial by combat. When a helmet or a lance is discovered in such a castle, we can but think that some of the armoury in the hall has been left lying in the drawing-room; and when the doors of this eighteenth century house, in which Squire Western might have lived, fly open at the approach of the rightful heir—well, we can but suspect draughts or bad locks. Nor, after all, is any of these novels really historical. At the most, there is a reference to a battle or some political movement, or a shadowy figure bearing a name known to history crosses the stage. This is not to be considered a fault. It arises from the limitation of the art of the writers. History to them is but a background, very faintly coloured, against which they may represent strange figures and striking incidents. In history for its own sake they have little interest.

These writers differ very much in their power of telling a story, and in the qualities which go to make a good novelist. Walpole's work has much more body than that of his would-be corrector, has also more suggestiveness and interest. But both make very little use of excellent material. We know how a poor talker

spoils a good tale in the telling, how badly the plot is constructed, how vapid the persons concerned. Much similar criticism might be applied to Walpole, while it would hold good almost entirely of Clara Reeve. All these novelists from Walpole to Godwin have little grasp of character. They are too much governed by general ideas, too intent on painting certain fixed types. Mrs. Radcliffe is most successful here; Clara Reeve, who makes her characters the mouth-pieces of a very feeble morality, and Godwin, who employs them to expound revolutionary ideas on politics and human life generally, are most to blame. All lack real humour. If Walpole's retainers raise a laugh, it is only because his idea of a humorous diversion is so comical. Probably, however, Mrs. Radcliffe did not explain away her terrors without a smile. One may criticise severely the diction of these tales. Walpole can give at times an antique flavour to his manner; he employs the old usage of the pronouns, obsolete forms of address, and a certain elevation of style. The same holds true, in a less degree, of Mrs. Radcliffe. But both lack ease and consistency, while Clara Reeve and Godwin make no such efforts. Here is a passage from "The Old English Baron" (original edition, p. 112):

"'What shall we do, cousin Jack,' said Wenlock,

'to pass away the time? It is plaguey dull, sitting here'—'dull enough,' said Markham; 'I think the best thing we can do is to go to bed and sleep it away.'—'Faith,' says Wenlock, 'I am in no disposition to sleep. Who would have thought the old man would have obliged us to spend the night here?' 'Don't say us, I beg of you, it was all your own doing,' replied Markham."

All this in the year of our Lord, 145-! Jones and Blifil and Partridge speak in this way. Nor is Godwin more successful. Here is how a father parts from his child to follow the constables of sixteenth century Switzerland ("St. Leon," 1831 edition, p. 215):

"'They shall not take you away, papa; that they shall not. I will hold you and will not let you go.'—'You are a good girl, Marguerite. But I know best what is proper, and you must not think to control me. The men will not do me any harm, child; they dare not. Perhaps I shall be back to dinner, and mamma will then tell me how good you have been.'"

One would never think that Dogberry and Verges were contemporaries of these constables. There is a modern tone in thought and language which quite destroys historic illusion.

One remark must qualify this criticism. Nowadays we criticise these earlier novelists from the

stand-point of readers of "Waverley" and later romances. It must be remembered that the romance-writers of the later eighteenth century had to devise new methods, and if they fail in many ways, it is only because they wrote when they did. There is more satisfaction in noting the romantic element, which gives their work its chief value. In "Men and Books" Stevenson has some interesting remarks on the differences which separate Scott, the romantic writer, from Fielding, the representative of the 'classical' novel of his age. In the work of the romantic writer, the reader becomes 'conscious of the background,' has 'a sense of the subtle influences that moderate and qualify a man's personality,' understands that 'the nature of the landscape or the spirit of the times' counts for something in a story. If these canons of criticism be applied to the novelists we have been considering, it will be found that in some of them the chains of the classical spirit have been cast off. Clara Reeve is still in the eighteenth century with Fielding. But Walpole (though otherwise there is little of the romantic about him) at least aspires to represent the influence of the occult world on character, and, in connecting his unnatural incidents with the sin and remorse of Manfred, he shows some understanding of how the supernatural may best be

used. In a way, indeed, he surpasses his followers here. Mrs. Radcliffe explains away her mysteries by means of mechanical devices. Godwin has really no sense of supernatural fear. At Udolpho the reader fears the unknown, but the unrevealed compact in "St. Leon" inspires no dread. The author tells us that the terms were such that it could never be revealed; one rather suspects, so little is the illusion his art conveys, that he himself knows nothing about it. But 'the nature of the landscape' counts for much both in Godwin and Mrs. Radcliffe. The Count of St. Leon is drawn by Byronic sympathy to high mountains, wide waters, and waste places. The landscapes of Mrs. Radcliffe, so charged with emotion, so harmonious with the spirit of the on-looker, have been praised of all critics, even while they condemned their artificiality. Indeed, the latter writer is romantic to the core. She understands how the ear of a reader is charmed by the sound of a lute at night in solitary places, how his eye follows with wonder an armed man upon the battlements in the moonlight. She surpasses Scott in winning the reader's sympathy for those subtle instincts and blank misgivings which have such power over the spirit of man, and in making so much out of a shadow, a touch, a cry at night, she is the forerunner of later mighty artists in romance.

It is well known that the successors of Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe formed a distinct school, the School of Terror. There horror was piled upon horror, the natural (in the sense of the ordinary) became the supernatural, ghosts gibbered in every street, and reality was left so far behind that in one of the most famous novels of this school, the hero was created not by God but by Man. But, for our present purpose, it is not worth while to criticise these romances. In the first place, the masterpieces of this school, "Melmoth" and "Frankenstein," were produced during the publication of the Waverley Novels. In the second place, any attraction which the Terror School had for Scott, was confessedly due to its early writers, to Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, and perhaps to Lewis. It is more to the purpose to consider the rise of the historical novel proper, which dealt with the men and events of history. A good representative of this class is Jane Porter, whose characteristics are all displayed in a novel well adapted for comparison with Scott—"The Scottish Chiefs."

Critics have few good things to say of Jane Porter. Yet, if good intention excuse bad work, her faults deserve pardon. Her youth, as told in the preface of 1840, presents a curious parallel to Scott's own. She had early associations with

the Border country, and her girlhood was spent in his own Edinburgh. Her interest in Scottish history and story was due to the tales told her in childhood by humble friends and servants; she was influenced even more than Scott by the struggle with Napoleon, and the newly-roused aspirations of the Poles directly inspired her "Thaddeus of Warsaw." One is at first sight surprised that critics should pass over in silence a novelist who, four years before the publication of "Waverley," had written a novel, praised by Sir Walter himself, dealing with ancient Scottish history. But the neglect is justified. Scott owes nothing to her, except perhaps a warning. It is not only that she hopelessly distorts the facts of history, that what she calls "some liberties with time and circumstances," involve the representation of Wallace's execution as the immediate precursor of Bannockburn. Her method is quite different from Scott's. Her effects are not produced by any real appreciation of national character and sentiment. Her chiefs are patriots, but not Scottish patriots. Her country-people are virtuous peasants; but there is no Cuddie Headrigg, and of course there is no dialect. A few changes in name and action, and the scene might have been laid in any country under the sun. Moreover, the heroes of her romance, for whom

she invents love-affairs, metaphysical soliloquies, sublime flirtations, whom she transports to all manner of strange scenes and adventures, are men who play a great part in history. The reader's historic sense, his reverence for great names is confused, perhaps offended. Such writing seems to deserve the condemnation of the hostile critic who calls historical fiction a lie, and not a noble one.

Now, it is very interesting to note that, at one time, Scott was much attracted to the literature of the Terror School. This school owed much to German romantic literature, and with the German romance-writers, Scott became acquainted, through the class he joined in 1792. Thus his first printed poems, "Lenore" and "William and Helen" were translations or imitations of the romantic poetry of Germany, and his first drama, "The House of Aspen," was modelled on the German romantic play. About this time he seems to have written much original poetry, dealing with the supernatural. Some specimens are given by Lockhart. One of these unpublished ballads, "The Shepherd's Tale," told the story of him who blew the horn before he drew the sword.

But even in the region of Terror Scott already felt that prose, not verse, was his proper instru-

ment, and in 1799 he began to weave the same legend into a prose romance. His model, as he confesses, was "The Castle of Otranto," and its chief interest was to consist in the legend of Canobie Dick and Thomas the Rhymer. "Thomas The Rhymer," however, is a mere fragment. His interest in the Terror School was short-lived, and he himself tells us how the poetry of Joanna Baillie soon gave him a distaste to such literature. Indeed, his common-sense and fundamentally rationalistic view of life must always have been revolted by the extravagance of many of the Terror writers, and the very year of the "Rhymer" fragment saw an attempt at prose fiction in another style. "The Lord of Ennerdale" sketch has nothing in common with the work of Walpole and Lewis, and, indeed, though quite ignored by critics, resembles the Waverley series much more than its contemporary effort. Here are the first hints of plans which the great novelist was often to follow. The story is told in a letter sent by one friend to another, has a modern setting, professes to follow an old manuscript in its delineation of the past. Unfortunately, it is so very fragmentary that it is impossible to discover its plot. But what we have is sufficient to show how early Scott abandoned his first literary love. "Guy Mannering" is perhaps the best

proof of how alien to his mind the Terror methods really were. The kernel of that novel is contained in the legend told him by John M'Kinlay, his father's servant, in which a youth, threatened from his natal hour by a mysterious fate, is enabled, through the help of an aged astrologer, to struggle with the Evil One and overcome him. We may imagine what a thrilling tale of horror Lewis or Maturin would have made out of such material. But who can find a trace of the Terror School in Scott's account of the fortunes of the Bertram family?

Scott once expressed his indebtedness to the novels of Cervantes. But of contemporary writers of fiction there were only two to whom he really owed any obligation. The extravagance and untruth of the Jane Porter school of historical novelists early roused the wrath of professed students of history, and Mr. Strutt, with a praiseworthy belief that example was better than precept, tried to prove that an antiquary could write a novel as well as anyone. The interest of the romance of "Queen-Hoo Hall" is that, as Strutt died before its completion, Scott was entrusted with the task of adding the finishing chapters. He did so in 1808-09. Strutt's work, which was meant to be a description of English manners in the reign of Henry VI., had little

merit; its fault, as pointed out by Scott, was that it appealed to the antiquary alone. Still, here again was a warning to the future author of "Waverley." Scott's own portion is remarkable only because he here began his practice of introducing songs into the narrative. The mere attempt at fiction, too, gave him confidence, and was a stimulus to original work. But he confessed that he owed much more to the work of Miss Edgeworth. Her descriptions of Irish manners first showed him how he might best apply his unrivalled knowledge of his native land. In his own words: "I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland." It is easy to see how Scott must have appreciated a work like "Castle Rackrent," where national manners are pictured with sympathy and yet with humour, where the life of the peasantry is painted with absolute truth, where the national dialect and turn of thought and expression colour the whole work. Miss Edgeworth's way of handling her material is like Scott's own. She has the same habit of including in a single narrative many stories illustrative of national manners. Sir Kit's treatment of his wife and the account of the 'honesty' which won the election, are good examples. Jason Quirk is a

slight sketch of an Irish Gilbert Glossin; Old Thady, with his love for the family and attachment to the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughin, is an Irish Caleb Balderstone.

We have seen that prose fiction played a part in the revival of romance. But, in the years immediately preceding "Waverley," prose fiction of this kind had fallen into disrepute and was chiefly represented by the illiterate productions of the Minerva Press. The spirit of satire, too, was not silent, and altogether it seemed as if prose might be forced to give up the treatment of romantic themes. But all the while there lay in a desk at Abbotsford the first chapters of a tale which was to bring about a revolution in the writing of romance. Scott had written the first chapters of "Waverley" in 1805, for, five years before "The Lady of the Lake," it seems to have been his intention to give a picture of Highland manners in prose. The criticism of Erskine, however, was unfavourable, and it was not till 1810 that Scott made any addition to the manuscript. In that year Ballantyne gave the author some encouragement, but, fearing that Scott's poetical reputation might suffer, he was not enthusiastic. Again the manuscript was laid aside, and for a time it was lost. In the summer of 1814 the lost chapters were found, and in three

weeks Scott finished the novel. The publication of "Waverley" on the 7th of July, 1814, revealed to the prose romance the new worlds awaiting its conquest.

CHAPTER III

THE WAVERLEY NOVELS: THE NOVELIST AT WORK: EXTERNALS

"On the whole, the critic's task is perhaps less to classify a type of character as good or bad, as worthy of so much praise or so much censure, than to mark the material out of which a man has his life to make, and the kind of use and form to which he puts his material."—*John Morley.*

Scott has once for all deprecated comparison of himself with Shakespeare. In the Journal of December, 1826, he writes: "The blockheads talk of my being like Shakespeare—not fit to tie his brogues." There is much wisdom and not a little humility in the remark, and in some ways such a comparison is very unwise, and yet, in what one might call the 'externals' of authorship —the manner, the motive, the sources—these two writers are at once so like and unlike that comparison for critical purposes is not unfruitful. In the case of Scott, much of the critic's work is already performed for him by the novelist himself.

He has told the history of his own compositions and indicated his chief authorities. He has been his own critic; he has defended his manner of composition and his employment of historical material. In Shakespearian criticism perhaps the most interesting problem has been the tracing of the dramatist's development, the attempt to find, mirrored in the plays, the changes in his attitudes to the world. The criticism of Scott's novels presents no such problem. When he began to write novels he was a man of mature age, with a mind fully formed and ideals firmly conceived. There came a great crisis in his life when the work of fifty-four years seemed to be shattered into fragments. But, though the Introduction to the Chronicles of the Canongate is somewhat gloomy, there is no novel of Scott's which can be said to have been written 'in the depths.'

There are, however, two characteristics of Scott's authorship upon which something must be said. The first is the gain the author of "Waverley" derived from his work; the second the anonymity in which he hid himself. Shakespeare was a share-holder in the Globe Theatre and the owner of New Place, Stratford. Scott was a secret partner in the Ballantyne printing and publishing business, and the Laird of Abbotsford. This would not matter in either case were it not

that, out of these facts, a complete theory has been formed of the motives which impelled the dramatist and the novelist to write. In Scott's case this theory has been stated most fully by Carlyle. According to this argument, we must believe that Scott wrote his novels because he wanted money to buy land. This greed of gain was the cause of the speed with which he wrote, of his carelessness of his immense production. He found that the public would pay for novels produced at the rate of so many a year, and that it demanded no very high standard of artistic excellence. His ambition was vulgar — the acquirement of wealth and position. To this vulgar ambition he prostituted his art, and the humours of Dandie Dinmont, the chivalry of the Black Knight, the charm of Diana Vernon, the agony of Edgar Ravenswood, were so many tricks to win money from an easily-amused public. When the relation is of so intimate a sort, it is impossible to keep quite apart the estimate of a man's work and the estimate of a man's character; if this be a true view of Scott's motive for writing, his work must almost necessarily fall in our esteem.

Now, it is undeniable that Scott was very anxious to make money; undeniable, too, that there was something not quite right in the secret

connection with the Ballantynes. The motive for secrecy is, of course, obvious enough. A strict line was then drawn between business life and professional life, and Scott could hardly have declared himself a printer and publisher without some loss in social status. Early in life, too, he had some reason for entering into the partnership; for his legal practice was decreasing, and he feared that as he became more completely involved in literary pursuits it would decrease still further. But as to what most concerns us, the motive for writing, it cannot be said that Scott here made the ideal world the servant of the material. His own answer to the charge ought surely to have some weight. It is contained in the conversation of Captain Clutterbuck with the Eidolon of the Author, related in the Introduction to "The Fortunes of Nigel," and is full of his own good sense. This talk of work for filthy lucre is, he maintains, very largely cant. Good pay does not harm the quality of work; "a successful author is a productive labourer" and worthy of his hire. And then comes surely a final answer to all who maintain the 'filthy lucre' theory: "No man of honour, genius, or spirit, would make the mere love of gain, the chief, far less the only, purpose of his labours. For myself, I am not displeased to find the game a winning one; yet while I

pleased the public, I should probably continue it merely for the pleasure of playing; for I have felt as strongly as most folks that love of composition which is perhaps the strongest of all instincts, driving the author to the pen, the painter to the pallet, often without either the chance of fame or the prospect of reward" ("The Fortunes of Nigel," vol. i. p. xlix.). Indeed, this whole conception of Scott's character seems to rest upon a confusion of thought. People are acquainted with Lockhart's pathetic picture of Scott in the toils, labouring night and day to clear away the burden of debt. They have applied this conception of the author to all his life, and think of him always as the painful drudge. But drudgery, task-work, are the very last terms that should be applied to the free and spontaneous flow of composition which must have made the morning hours at Abbotsford as happy as any passed by man.

But it may still be maintained that Scott attached too much importance to wealth and position. The charge is true, though not perhaps in the sense in which it is stated. There is a passage in the Journal (December, 1825) in which Scott says of his day-dreaming that he has not found "this castle-building fatal to exertions in active life." But alas! both in the figure and in

the letter this 'castle-building' was fatal. The dream of his life was bound up with his ideal of society, a modern feudal Scotland where old family ties should be renewed and ancient historic houses established in strength. His ambition, foreshadowed in the "Lay" and possibly in "Rob Roy," was to revive the traditions of his race and found a family possessed of lands on Tweedside. There, he would rule his tenants with kindly sway; there he would dispense the ancient Border hospitality. No one can read the description of Abbotsford life, given by many writers, and not feel that Scott's dream was very beautiful. But it lured him into dangerous ways and blinded him to actual facts. His dream had its humorous side. It is so like Scott (who laughs at authors' tricks which he employs himself, and tells a thrilling ghost story without believing it), that he himself should laugh at the very practice which brought him ruin. Edie Ochiltree, speaking of Oldbuck's antiquarian greed for land, says: "But, Lord, they tell me your honour has given Johnie Howe acre for acre of the laigh crofts for this heathery knowe!" Here is the humour of it. For the pathos—well, one has but to visit the Abbotsford of to-day.

Scott has told his readers that his anonymity was of great importance for his work, and that

otherwise he could not have written freely. Any criticism of the novels ought therefore to consider the motive which led him to conceal his authorship. The primary reason is obvious. In publishing "Waverley" he was essaying a new form of literature, and the ill-success of the novel would have damaged his poetical reputation. But why did he continue to conceal his name? As is always the case with Scott, the motives are very mixed, and even the explanation in the General Introduction does not make matters very clear. Perhaps there were three main causes. "Such was my humour," he says, and undoubtedly he enjoyed the joke immensely. The anonymous publication of two of the longer poems; the attempt to father them upon Erskine; the secret connection with the Ballantynes—all prove that he took great delight in a mystery of this sort. Again, the concealment of his name protected him from what he liked least in the calling of a man of letters—the flattery of friends, the irritation of personal criticism, the self-consciousness of authorship. Finally, it was part of the pride which was at once Scott's strength and weakness that he was rather ashamed of the rôle of the mere man of letters. In a letter to Crabbe written some time in 1812, he talks of the duty of playing "a more respectable part in society than the mere

poet." The anonymity enabled the Laird of Abbotsford to play what he thought to be a more respectable part.

For literature this secrecy had at least one important result. Critics do not notice that to this source may be traced almost all the delightful settings and epistles prefixed to many of the novels. In themselves these introductions have much merit; the scenes at the Wallace Arms, the discovery of Old Mortality by Peter Pattieson, the Dick Tinto incident, the humorous implication in the narrative of the characters of Jedidiah Cleishbotham and Captain Clutterbuck, the personal touches in Chrystal Croftangry, deserve far more attention than readers generally give. But apart from their intrinsic worth, these introductory epistles had two main purposes. In the first place, Scott employed them to conceal himself from public view and to combat criticism which threatened to disclose his secret. Sometimes he hoped that he might really deceive the public; again he merely hoped to mystify his readers or increase their curiosity. Thus the first "Tales of my Landlord," issued by a new publisher and in a new form, were a deliberate attempt to persuade the reading public that a new author had appeared, and the prefatory letter to "Ivanhoe" had originally a similar intention.

Elsewhere he combated the arguments of Mr. Adolphus's clever book, or exposed imitators, or endeavoured to convince his readers that only a joint-stock company could produce so many tales at once. He had, too, a second purpose in these prefaces. His anonymity prevented personal defence of his views of fiction and history, or personal reply to criticism. Once, it is true, he wrote a review of his own works, but he regretted this breach of literary etiquette, and found that in these introductions he could express himself far more freely. Hence it was here that he defended against Clutterbuck his way of writing, and against Dryasdust his handling of history; here that he made his apology for mistake in fact or treatment; here too, that, worn with work, he attributed, with his usual mingling of humour and pathos, the imperfections of his two last tales to the death of Peter Pattieson. He employed this means also to give a sort of fictitious authority to his tales, and thus explained his motives for breaking new ground in "Ivanhoe" and "Quentin Durward"; finally, the fathering of his novels upon imaginary persons was but another aspect of his aloofness from his art and his apologetic attitude towards it.

It would be a great thing if criticism could show how the entire work of an author grew,

could show the living organism developing from small beginnings until it became the splendid whole we know, complicated in structure and manifold in function. Yet this is a task beyond our powers. It is impossible to depict any orderly development in Scott's mind of the great structure we call the Waverley Novels. Professor Herford ("The Age of Wordsworth"), in some acute criticism of Scott, states that the history of their development is that of the gradual extension of a fixed method to wider fields, and divides the novels into three groups: (1) 1814 to 1819, treatment of seventeenth and eighteenth century Scotland: (2) 1819 to 1823, treatment of the English Middle Ages: (3) 1823 to 1831, treatment of Continental history. But Professor Herford himself shows that the groups overlap. No sooner had "Ivanhoe" been written than the author came back to Scottish history, while the novels immediately succeeding "Quentin Durward" dealt with Scotland, contemporary and past. On the whole, however, this triple division is the best that can be made, for 1819 and 1823 mark real extensions of method. An earlier extension is noted by Lockhart. In "Waverley" his sources were chiefly tales told him in boyhood, particularly those of Invernahyle; in "Guy Mannering" he sketched the Scotland of his

early youth; in "The Antiquary" the Scotland of his early manhood. But in "Old Mortality," published in 1816, he made his first attempt to reconstruct the past from written records. Hence Professor Herford's first group ought perhaps to be subdivided. But Scott's work is the last place where orderly development should be looked for. One never knows whence his mind will catch inspiration. His creative power finds recreation in contrast. From the almost pure imagining of "The Pirate" he turns to reconstruct, from countless documents and plays, the London of James VI. He pictures the state-craft of France and Burgundy, but turns, with a sigh of relief, to draw the humours of everyday life in a health resort, and to see, beneath the common-place surface, the play of terrible passions. Not until the last illness is there real deterioration in the long series. There is much admirable work in "The Fair Maid" and "Anne of Geierstein." It is true that, as time went on, his material threatened to become exhausted. Scenes and characters employed before are used in later novels; Flora M'Ivor is the first of a series of high-strung heroines, Davie Gellatly, too, has many successors, and parts of "Rob Roy," as will be noticed later, curiously anticipate scenes in "Redgauntlet." Yet, as a rule, new setting

is made to give variety and freshness to old material, and if Scott sins in repeating himself, he is in good company, for he sins with Shakespeare. It seems impossible to maintain, with some critics, that Scott's work suffered permanent injury from the malady which afflicted him from 1817 till the beginning of 1819. During that illness "Rob Roy," "The Heart of Midlothian," "The Bride" and "The Legend" were written and published, while the years which followed the re-establishment of health saw Scott apply his genius to the fictitious treatment of English and foreign history. His name will always be associated with the pure romance of chivalry. But "Ivanhoe" was not published until after the illness.

A melancholy interest attached itself to his last published novel. From Smailholm, where, for literary purposes, it all began, to Dryburgh, where it all ended, is but a few miles' walk. And so, as in youth it was by the Border ballads and tales he had first gained firm footing in the world of letters, now, in his last days, he wrote once more of Border castles and Border life and the ripple of south-country streams over the pebbles. The beginning and end of his life were one.

Anyone who traces the sources of Scott's novels

must be amazed at the receptivity of his mind. "Ivanhoe" is a good example of his general method; old histories and chronicles give him his idea of the time and its manners; from ballad and legend and romance he drew the character of Richard I., and many of the Robin Hood incidents. The name of the hero came from an old rhyme on Hampden's ancestors, and that of Front De Bœuf from a chronicle. Mr. Skene suggested to him his treatment of the Jews. The substance of a conversation with William Clerk was embodied in the philological discussion of Gurth and Wamba. Athelstane's resuscitation was due to James Ballantyne, and the particulars of the Templar's death were copied from those attending the sudden decease of a Mr. Elphinstone at Edinburgh. Here the sources are of three kinds: reading, the suggestion of friends, actual experience. This last general source has a subdivision—autobiography.

Some remark is necessary upon each of these sources. As a rule Scott did not select a period and then read up specially about it. He verified former knowledge, increased his acquaintance with details, tried and tested views he had already formed. For the rest, he depended upon his memory. In the Journal (Oct. 1826) he compares himself with his imitators in historical

fiction: "One advantage I have over all of them; they may do their fooling with better grace, but I do it more natural. They have to read old books to get their knowledge, I write because I have long since read such works and possess the information they seek for." "Woodstock" is a curious illustration of these remarks. The tricks played by the Loyalists on the Roundhead commissioners are related in a series of contemporary pamphlets which Scott had once read. When he wrote the novel he remembered the incidents, but where he had read of them he quite forgot. Thus much of the novel was entirely founded on the unverified recollection of former reading. His employment of history will be treated in a future chapter; to understand his method it is sufficient to note here that from the mere hints of history he constructed the characters of Henry Gow and Conacher. The novel most informed by his reading is perhaps "The Fortunes of Nigel." The original design of the book was a series of private letters illustrative of manners in the time of James I.; but on his friends representing that he was wasting good material for a novel, he abandoned the plan and turned the antiquarian letters into a work of fiction. The origin of the book probably accounts for its richness in historical detail. But the knowledge displayed was the

result of the reading of a life-time. Jacobean plays, poems, pamphlets, tracts, memoirs, histories, letters, had been thoroughly digested by this omnivorous reader of mighty memory, and contributed turns of speech, incidents, characters, and descriptions of costume and manners to the novelist's living picture of Old London. Other men have possessed similar knowledge; it is sometimes possessed by the antiquarian or literary specialist; but Scott's great merit was that he united this knowledge with the genius of a creative artist, and that, out of the trivial detail of a hundred plays and pamphlets, he fashioned the rich stuff and material of a splendid historical romance.

Scott owed a great deal to his friends. Erskine and James Ballantyne were, of course, his regular critics; but in the way of actual suggestion there were two men to whom his obligations were so great that their names deserve to be remembered as long as his work is read. Mr. Skene's important contribution to "Ivanhoe" has already been noticed; he also suggested the introduction into "Anne of Geierstein" of the Vehmgericht and of King René. Skene, too, travelled much on the Continent, and his journals and sketches were of great service to Scott in writing romances of foreign history. But Scott's ablest helper was

Mr. Joseph Train. He had originally literary ambitions for himself, but no sooner had he become acquainted with Scott than he abandoned all idea of independent composition and set himself to supply the novelist with material for his fictions. One would like to know more about him. It is not every man who can recognise his own limitations and set himself to serve a greater. But if there were originally self-sacrifice, it must have been repaid by the consequences. Train recalled to Scott the astrologer story which forms the basis of "Guy Mannering," and supplied him with details of Galloway gypsy life. From his information he derived the machinery of the "Tales of my Landlord." It was Train who suggested that Claverhouse would be a suitable hero for romance and that the narrative would come well from Old Mortality; it was he, too, who, by collecting information on the Western Covenanters, encouraged Scott to carry out this idea. Probably Train's present of Rob Roy's purse first turned Scott's attention to the romantic possibilities of his country's Robin Hood. Finally, the plot of "The Surgeon's Daughter" was related by the same indefatigable friend. Never was service, so generously given, employed to such noble purpose.

To mention even a part of the novelist's debt

to experience would fill pages. Some account of such sources has been already given in the first chapter. The friends of his early boyhood seem to have impressed his imagination with particular clearness, and George Constable, Mr. Whale, and Invernahyle all sat for portraits in the novels. Nor did actual experience supply him only with character, plot, and landscape. Incident, name, saying, were stored up in the writer's mind and embodied naturally in his compositions. Thus the famous 'prætorian' incident in "The Antiquary" actually happened to the father of his friend, William Clerk; Dalgetty and Meg Dods, to select two of many instances, were names of persons met in his youth; 'what for no?' was the favourite expression of Willie Laidlaw. Mr. Skene relates how Scott included in his work a conversation he once had with a ship-wrecked sailor, and in "The Fortunes of Nigel" (vol. ii. p. 168) the author himself tells us that he made a practice of extracting information from everyone he met, though his fellow-traveller might be "the stupidest of all possible companions . . . or the most arrant cumber-corner."

It is interesting to note autobiographic elements in the novels. He seems to have embodied portions of his nature in Colonel Mannering and Jonathan Oldbuck. In the former he sketches his

man of the world side, but very slightly and with little earnest intention. In the latter he satirises his own antiquarian pursuits, and there is perhaps a touch of tender reminiscence in the Antiquary's love-story. Chrystal Croftangry, of course, has much of himself, and in the story of the dweller in the Cannongate are sketches of his father, his family, and his friends. The personal interest of "Redgauntlet" has often drawn attention; we have already seen that Alan Fairford does not completely represent the young Scott. But what has been persistently overlooked is the personal interest of "Rob Roy" and its strange relation to "Redgauntlet." Scott identifies himself with Frank Osbaldistone more completely than with any of his heroes. We saw, in the first chapter, that the account of Frank's education, his love of poetry and romance, his hate of the drudgery of business, were derived from Scott's own youth. But Frank's further history has no less personal interest. His political attitude is Scott's own; Jacobitism offends his judgment but appeals to his sentiment. He is no singer, but is said to have sung a song while drunk; the same incident happened to Scott. The Osbaldistones, like the Scotts, are a long-descended family of country gentlemen, and Frank's father, like Scott's, has been the first to engage in business. May there

not be a hint of the ambition of the author's life in Frank's escape from the trammels of affairs to occupy the coveted position of a landed proprietor? Finally, all critics admit the personal element in "Redgauntlet." But parts of "Rob Roy" curiously foreshadow that novel. In both tales many of the chief adventures take place in the north of England; the scene at Justice Inglewood's is very like the later scene at Squire Foxley's. The fortunes of the heroes of both romances are involved in the preparations for a Jacobite rising. It is very characteristic of the descendant of Beardie to connect his own fictitious personality with the fortunes of the House of Stuart.

How spontaneously all this vast knowledge of men and books flowed from him is seen in the rapidity with which he worked. It would be idle to describe once more the happy morning hours of composition; Lockhart and every successive biographer have made them familiar to readers. Such rapid writing, the affectation that composition was a sort of amusement in leisure time, seems to have been the fashion in literary Edinburgh. The Blackwood group, particularly Wilson and Lockhart, carried this fashion to the extreme a few years later than "Waverley," when the wonder of Edinburgh society was how Wilson

found time to write (Mrs. Oliphant: "Annals of a Publishing House," vol. i.). Carlyle was indignant at the practice, declared that "no great thing was ever done with ease," and urged that Shakespeare was an exception to this rule only because he "first thought intensely." But Scott, too, first thought intensely. It would be a great mistake to imagine that the few hours spent in the study (I refer, of course, to the years before 1825) were the only hours devoted to composition. Scott has told us how his work was an abiding presence with him, occupying his thoughts as he lay awake at nights or dressed in the morning, as he cut trees in the plantations or walked with friends. Indeed, one has but to remember his description of his life as "a waking dream" to understand how often in the course of his full busy day, his thoughts must have been far from Edinburgh or Abbotsford.

The delightful Introduction to "Nigel" describes his method of work. The truth is that he had no method. He made efforts to sketch out a book beforehand. But he could never follow a plan. He surrendered himself to his story and let it carry him whithersoever it would. Now a character like Dugald Dalgetty charmed his own creator, and in depicting his humours the main story was forgotten. Or an

incident or a curious custom won the writer's attention, and he turned aside into a by-way. This method or lack of method led to serious faults. There is a lack of proportion in the novels. For example, few pages in "The Black Dwarf" are so well written as those describing the Eliot household. They contain one of Scott's very best descriptions of old Scots country life. But the author wishes the reader to give his attention mainly to the love-affair of Earnscliff and Isabel Vere and the political intrigue with which it is bound up. The fortunes of the Eliots are meant to be subsidiary. Here Scott's common fault comes in. He is so attracted by his own creation of the Eliots that he gives them a prominence which the main action does not warrant. On the other hand, his way of composition had great advantages. The author who follows a set plan may achieve great constructive triumphs; but his story is apt to move mechanically and his characters to become at times mere parts of the machine. An author like Scott who surrenders himself to his characters is certain to create men and women who have real living interest. Scott, too, could have worked in no other fashion. Let him surrender himself to the flow of his fancy and the story would move rapidly, the characters be full of life and vigour.

Restraint and a settled purpose dried up the creative springs within him.

Scott's plots are generally admitted to be weak. Yet it cannot be said that rapidity of work affords any criterion here. Carlyle had an idea that "Waverley" was written slowly, and therefore praised its construction. Curiously enough, Stevenson, too, thought that "Waverley" was written more carefully than the others ("Letters," vol. i. p. 315). But, in fact, the last two volumes were written in three weeks, and it is the one novel which Scott himself selects as his very worst example of careless construction! The first part of the book does, however, give an impression that the writer is taking pains; he is feeling his way, is anxious that the reader should understand what he is aiming at. Perhaps this was what Stevenson meant. "Guy Mannering" was Scott's greatest feat in rapid writing, and was the result of 'six weeks at Christmas.' Yet it may be questioned if Scott showed anywhere greater constructive skill. The novel unfolds itself like an Elizabethan drama. There is a prologue in two acts. The first, which occupies ten chapters, finds its unity in the person of Guy Mannering. It is he who makes the prediction of young Bertram's fate, who sees in the ruined castle Meg Merrilies tracing in the threads of the

spindle the boy's destiny, and hears her mystic song interrupted by the hoarse cry of Dirk Hatteraick. Thus are momentarily grouped together the actors who are to play the great part in the coming drama. The second act of the prologue tells of the murder of Kennedy, the abduction of young Bertram, and the birth of Lucy amid such terrible circumstances. Then the curtain rises on the first act of the drama proper, and discovers the arrival of Mannering at the Kippletringan Arms just when the fortunes of the Bertram family have once more come to a crisis. There is further skill shown in what might be called the second scene of the first act, in which Meg Merrilies first crosses the path of young Bertram, and chance turns both in the direction of Ellangowan. Is there any Elizabethan play which has greater dramatic unity? The plot of the latter part of the novel is much inferior, but in the first volume, at least, of his Christmas amusement Scott has achieved a triumph in construction.

But for the lame and impotent conclusion one would also have to praise the plot of "The Heart of Midlothian." Here Scott set himself a difficult task. The story at once plunges the reader into a state of things which he cannot comprehend without knowledge of three previous circum-

stances—the relations of Robertson with Madge Wildfire, with Effie Deans, and with the Fife smugglers. To pause in the course of the story, to give bald, straightforward narratives of these past events, is the novelist's plain and obvious method, but it is also the least artistic. On the whole, Scott avoids the danger well. The past is gathered from its effects on the present, from the dramatic confessions of the sin-stricken actors, from the wild and whirling words of the crazed girl. There is something of the same dramatic revelation of a sinful past in "The Antiquary," "The Pirate," and "St. Ronan's Well," but nowhere, except perhaps when Elspeth unfolds her terrible tale, is it so well managed. As a rule, however, Scott adopts a less dramatic plan and begins his tale at the beginning. As time went on and treatment and subjects tended to become hackneyed we can see him employ devices to give variety. Thus, in "The Talisman," the unity most insisted upon is unity of place; the Diamond of the Desert is the scene of the three turning-points of the story—the meeting of Kenneth and Saladin, the disguising and sending back of the Scottish knight, the trial by combat. Or again, the author changes his device; in "Redgauntlet" he tries the epistolary method of Richardson; in "St. Ronan's Well" he gives each chapter a

heading, such as "an Old-world Landlady," and tries to group the events of the chapter round the heading. It is usually said that the novel in letters was a mistake; still, while the letters checked his power of making a story move, they were well suited for the personal confessions of his youth. But each of the methods was a *tour-de-force*, never repeated.

While, therefore, Scott shows at times considerable skill in plots, his chief merit here is the general power of telling a story well. His chief faults are that he lacks a sense of proportion in narrative and character, and that he often winds up a plot very feebly. No one, however, seems to have remarked the real cause of these 'huddled-up' endings. "The Abbot" is a good example. The tale moves rapidly to the exciting departure of Mary into England; a few dry pages, like a note by another hand, are added to tell the after-fortunes of the lovers and of the rest of the *dramatis personæ*. This feeble close is the result of a cardinal fault. In the early part of the novel the reader's attention is concentrated on the young lovers; in the closing chapters interest is absorbed by Mary and public events. On the whole, Scott is very successful in interweaving public and private affairs. But he cannot always contrive that the denouements or catastrophes of public

and private affairs should coincide. They do so in the splendid close of "Redgauntlet." But usually one interest must be sacrificed to the other, and hence comes the 'huddling-up.' "Rob Roy," with its slaughter in two pages, Kyd-like were it not comical, of Sir Hildebrand and his stalwart sons, is usually quoted as the worst example of this fault. But the trouble here comes from a different source. Stevenson once wrote a letter to Mr. Barrie condemning books which did not carry out their original intention. Now, "Rob Roy" seems to come under this condemnation. The book makes quite a good end with the recovery of the papers, the reconciliation of father and son, the receipt of Die's ring and message of farewell. There was no need to bring in "The Fifteen" at all; the rising had not yet begun. It will be objected that this makes a complete change in the fortunes of Die and Frank. But their love is not meant to end well. As part of the plot of a novel for publication, the love-story is allowed to end happily; but the writer's imaginative conception of the situation seems to be opposed to the conventional course of things. Scott's own history, the choice of the heroine's name, the atmosphere of the love-scenes—all are against a happy ending. The lovely vision of Die on the Aberfoyle road has a gesture of farewell. What,

then, made Scott add the uninteresting ending? It seems to have been that evil influence on his artistic sense—respect for public taste, which, while gratifying, he affected to despise. It was probably with the purpose of pleasing the public that he added the conventional marriage and settlement. It is only fair to remember that Scott was very ill at this time, and his critical faculties may not have been as alert as usual.

Scott's style has been the despair of all who love form and felicity in expression. Its faults have often been summed up by indignant critics—its lack of distinction, its loose shambling sentences, its unequable choice of words. It is positively ungrammatical at times; the author confesses in the Journal that he 'never learned grammar.' Scott never pauses to find the one sufficient term; a phrase like 'the bugle of the north blast' (which may have suggested a similar expression in "Weir of Hermiston") is very exceptional, and, indeed, rarely do Scott's sentences linger in one's mind. But while much attention has been directed to the faults of his expression, its merits, which are great, have been little praised. In the first place, his use of the Scots dialect is admirable; the words then, unlike much of his writing, become strong, pithy, fitted to things. Scott was aware of his opportunities here. In the

advertisement to "The Antiquary" he speaks of 'the antique force and simplicity' of such a dialect, of its traces of scriptural eloquence, and of its power of lending pathos and dignity to the speech of the peasant. What a noble use Scott made of such an instrument, the famous speech of Jeanie Deans before Queen Caroline has made known to all readers; there is a full rich flavour, too, in the dialect of "Wandering Willie's Tale." Less familiar, perhaps, is the farewell of Meg Merrilies to Ellangowan ("Guy Mannering," vol. i. p. 79):

"Ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram! This day have ye quenched seven smoking hearths—see if the fire in your ain parlour burn the blyther for that. Ye have riven the thack off seven cottar houses—look if your ain roof-tree stand the faster. Ye may stable your stirks in the shealings at Derncleugh—see that the hare does not couch on the hearth-stane at Ellangowan. Ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram—what do you glower after our folk for? There's thirty hearts there, that wad hae wanted bread ere ye had wanted sunkets, and spent their lifeblood ere ye had scratched your finger. Yes—there's thirty yonder, from the auld wife of an hundred to the babe that was born last week, that ye have turned out o' their bits o' bields, to sleep with the tod and the black-cock

in the muirs! Ride your ways, Ellangowan. Our bairns are hinging at our weary backs—look that your braw cradle at hame be the fairer spread up—not that I am wishing ill to little Harry, or to the babe that's yet to be born—God forbid—and make them kind to the poor, and better folk than their father! and now, ride e'en your ways. . . ."

One can but exclaim, as Queen Caroline does elsewhere, "This is eloquence."

Scott's style has a second great merit. His historical novels dealt with periods ranging from the reign of Alexander Comnenus at Constantinople to the last efforts of the Jacobites in Scotland and England. How was a writer to find a style to suit all periods, and all sorts and conditions of men? It has been seen how writers like Clara Reeve and Godwin failed here. But Scott, though not uniformly correct, is wonderfully successful. Strutt's experiment had taught him that a lavish employment of archaisms closed his pages to all but the antiquarian. On the other hand, a familiar style like Godwin's in "St. Leon" was fatal to all historic illusion. Scott steered a middle course. Realism, in the case of a mediæval romance like "Ivanhoe," was impossible. He therefore adopted a certain convention in style. The language of his chivalrous romances may,

perhaps, best be compared with the prose of the Elizabethan dramatists. It is capable of being used by prince and knight, by serf and jester. It aids the historic imagination; for, although always easy to understand, it is not modern, and gains dignity and remoteness by employing older turns of expression, terms used only in books dealing with past ages or in old plays and poems. Indeed, in its use of archaic forms for dignity's sake, the diction of the chivalrous romances is like that of poetry. Such a style was possible only to a man of Scott's wide reading. Just as his poetry, in its use of expletives and proper names, embodied many reminiscences of the ballads and metrical romances, so his prose style in the historical novels owed much to his reading of old books, and especially of the Elizabethan dramatists. How well he knew his Shakespeare is proved by the Journal and the quotations in the novels; but no other proof is needed than, for example, "Ivanhoe," "Woodstock," and "The Fair Maid of Perth," in which whole paragraphs are constructed of Shakespearian sentences. This unconscious reminiscence, which is to be distinguished from Oldbuck's habit of quotation, is even seen in parts of the tales of eighteenth century Scotland, and colours some of the speeches of Lilias Redgauntlet. Finally, when Scott

wishes to clothe a death-scene in language of dramatic pathos, he again turns for a model to the Elizabethan tragedy. Here are the last words of old Elspeth ("The Antiquary," vol. ii. p. 258):

"Call Miss Neville—What do you mean by Lady Geraldin? I said Eveline Neville—not Lady Geraldin—there's no Lady Geraldin—tell her that, and bid her change her wet gown, and no' look sae pale. Bairn! what should she do wi' a bairn? Maidens hae nane, I trow.—Teresa—Teresa—my lady calls us! Bring a candle, the grand staircase is as mirk as a Yule midnight. We are coming, my lady!"

The dialect is Scots. But is there not here an echo of the theatre of Elizabeth and James I.?

One further remark must be made on Scott's style; it is that of the teller of tales. His friend, Mr. Morritt, has left a description of his talk, and his talk and his prose style seem to have been very similar. His conversation was marked by spontaneity, natural ease, wealth of illustration, warmth and energy, skill in giving to an incident a humorous or pathetic meaning. These are also the characteristics of the novelist. Sir Leslie Stephen ("Half Hours in a Library," vol. i.) remarks that many of the best anecdotes in the novels had been related in conversation a hundred

times, and that Scott had thus served a long apprenticeship to the art of story-telling. At times, indeed, his manner is ludicrously like that of the *raconteur*. He explains that the hero is to be left to eat a meal while something else goes on, or utters an audible sigh of relief when he has completed some tiresome task of recapitulation. But the talkative style has the merit of bringing the reader into contact with Scott's own personality. It is scarcely a loss that Lockhart was not a Boswell. Scott's talk is there, in the novels, claiming the ear of every reader.

Scott then is, once and for all, the supreme type of the uncritical artist. His project is to please. In manner as in matter he is the very antithesis of the ideal of classical art. He blames Campbell for being "a great corrector, which succeeds as ill in composition as in education." We have seen into what faults his lack of correction led him. "The worst is I never quite know when I am right or wrong" is the plaintive confession of the Journal, and this lack of self-criticism led him to depend very much upon friends. Unfortunately James Ballantyne, along with Erskine, his chief adviser, was not a good critic. The melancholic Presbyterian printer was strangely attracted to romances of the Middle Ages, and his influence tended to check Scott's production

of his most characteristic work. Thus, when Scott expresses a liking for his own tale of Elspat M'Tavish, Ballantyne "roars for chivalry." There is hardly any instance of Ballantyne's advice being of service. It was he who despised as vulgar and low the description of Scottish manners in "The Antiquary," who raised from the dead the unfortunate Athelstane, and who, by his prudery, ruined the plot of "St. Ronan's Well." This last interference was so violent that one wonders how Scott endured that others should meddle so much with his own creations. But the truth is that he did not take his work seriously enough. The mottoes and 'old play' fragments illustrate his attitude. There are two points about these which readers forget. In the first place, it should be noticed in passing that the 'old play' fragments are commonly attributed to Scott. But it should be remembered that he once told Clutterbuck how, in a vision of the night, the spirit of Warburton's cook of unhappy memory discovered to him the sooty remains of the lost collection of plays! Again, the mottoes, original or quoted, are often serious in intent. But very often their purpose is satiric. There is scarcely a novel of which this does not hold good; but the mocking mottoes of "Guy Mannering" and "Kenilworth" and the Hudibrastic headings of the Covenanting

chapters in "Old Mortality" are good examples. Here Scott curiously adopts the attitude of a possibly hostile critic, and seems to laugh at his own work. His humorous detachment from his own compositions is very different from the high seriousness of a self-conscious artist like Milton. Yet this objectivity was of great consequence. What would a 'lean hot spirit' have done when subject to the distraction of a life like Scott's? The duties of legal office, the endless claims of hospitality, the love of field-sports, the interest in politics, would have been fatal to the absorption and aloofness which go to the making of a writer whose work is his idol. Nor ought the modern reader to complain. It is just this objectivity which in a day of metaphysical fictions and novels with a purpose, gives to the Waverley Novels their freshness and charm.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAVERLEY NOVELS: HISTORY, ROMANCE, REALITY.

"The king of the romantics."—*Stevenson.*

It will be remembered that about 1814 the romance held no very high place in the world of letters. The historical romance, in particular, had been handled with indifferent success, and from Walpole to Strutt and Jane Porter writers of such fiction had fallen into three kinds of mistakes. A novelist like Clara Reeve might lay a story in a certain century, but make no attempt to sketch the historical background or deal with the men and events of the time. Such a romance was not an historical novel proper. Or an antiquarian like Strutt might make fiction a feeble vehicle for instruction in the manners and customs of a by-gone age. Or, finally, the great figures of a stirring period might fill the pages of a novelist like Jane Porter, but fact and fiction be so commingled, the details of history and tradition

so violated, sense of time and place so offended, that the romance should lose all claim to be considered 'historical' and take its proper place as purely imaginative fiction. Romance was suffering the sceptre of the realm of fiction and history to slip from her grasp, and there seemed no force sufficient to bid her awake and claim her ancient crown.

But there came one who raised the bowed head and nerved the sceptreless right hand and established Romance upon a more high and glorious throne. And he who enthroned again the Old Romance was Walter Scott.

The changes which Scott effected were so important that the results were similar in extent to those which Marlowe and his contemporaries produced in the Elizabethan drama. With the instinct of genius he avoided the faults of his predecessors. The thin, barren imagining of a writer of the Clara Reeve stamp could never have been congenial to a rich, exuberant spirit like his. We know, too, that he consciously set himself to avoid the pit-fall of the antiquary. There are differences of opinion upon the measure of his success, and here and there are pages over which Jonathan Oldbuck may have guided the pen. But as a rule Dryasdust knows his place. The reader may have examined the collection of some antiquarian

friend of vast learning and genial humour, and had the delight of finding that the owner's remarks, so racy and well-informed, clothed the dry relics with life and meaning. For the reader who will surrender himself to his author there is a similar charm in the novelist's pictures of ancient costume and manner. Nor did Scott fall into the mistake of the Jane Porter school. Her problem was really the critical one for the historical romance. How was history to wed fiction? Her solution had been the falsifying of history. But Scott adopted a new method. He made certain concessions to the convention of the novel. There must be a hero and heroine, and a love-story, and a plot. But his general rule was that the characters moved by the conventional machinery of the novel must not be persons in the fore-front of history. They might be closely connected with great men and women, and play a part in famous campaigns and memorable councils. But the success of the historical romance depends upon such characters being *private* persons. Scott saw, or rather the story-teller's instinct taught him, that an historical novel was different in kind from a history-play of the Shakespeare type. All art is a convention, but the novel is less of a convention than the drama. It is more familiar, nearer the ground, more detailed

in trivial aspects. Hence, if the novelist subjects history to the motion of his conventional machinery, it is hard for him to preserve the dignity and grandeur of his subject, and to maintain, at the full height of their stature, the heroes of his race. There were faults in Scott's method. As we saw, it made the management of the plot very difficult at times. But it wedded the probability of history to the probability of romance.

It is possible to give a genetic account of most of the great writers of the time of Wordsworth. They mostly illustrate phases of the intellectual movement of their time, which is perhaps best called "The Revival of Imagination." Some such account may be given of Scott. But it would omit much of the man and of the writer. He is bigger than the men who were completely absorbed by the Revival and yet he is less. He brought to the writing of fiction a mind which united, as they were united in none of his contemporaries, a passion for romance with a genial understanding of the more prosaic facts of life. What may be called the revolutionary tendencies in contemporary thought did not affect him. He passed through no crisis of religious or political belief. The spiritual and social theories of the time did not move him; he gave no spiritual

interpretation of Nature, nor did he see in the Scots peasant the ideal simplicity of human life. No social philosophy coloured his pictures of the life of the poor. Wordsworth's Cumberland Beggar has a reason for his existence:

> While thus he creeps
> From door to door, the Villagers in him
> Behold a record which together binds
> Past deeds and offices of charity,
> Else unremembered.

But Edie Ochiltree exists by reason of his own incomparable humour, courage and independence. The function in society of such a mendicant Scott believed to be just that upon which Wordsworth moralises, and the readiness of the bowlers to help Edie when arrested shows that he was a valued member of the Fairport community. But not for a moment did Scott dream of inserting social theories—which, indeed, he held unconsciously—in a novel. It was no social philosophy, but genuine kindliness and love of human nature, actual knowledge and appreciation of poorer Scottish society, which led Scott to paint so faithfully the life of the peasant.

But, in other respects, Scott's novels were the product of their age. They were romantic; they represented man and the world in the sea-less, land-less light of imagination; they found strange

affinities between man and nature; they roused the spirit of wonder, they brought on 'the ague of the mind.' They were idealistic, for they turned from modern life to find a fuller satisfaction in a peopled past. At the same time the novels were what one must call, for want of a better term, realistic. The new imaginative sympathy had, of course, a feeling for such aspects of life; there is a sense in which Wordsworth is a realist. Scott, however, was a realist in other fashion. His novels gave the plain, matter-of-fact view of life quite as well as the poetic. He did not always sound the clarion. He saw the romantic possibilities in the life of a Highland cateran; but he condemned it, through the lips of the Bailie, as nothing but stealing, and would have apprenticed its young votaries to honest trades. He saw, with tender pity, brave men go to the scaffold for their devotion to a hopeless cause; but he told the world through Dugald Dalgetty that such men were foolish, for they would have been better paid on the other side. From this union, this contrast, comes the peculiar atmosphere of his novels, and their most pregnant criticism of life.

All critics do not accept this view of the novelist. There is a general impression that Scott is to be considered "the king of the romantics."

Yet there are those who would deny him his kingdom. We saw that the art of Mrs. Radcliffe was romantic, and we look upon Mrs. Radcliffe as one of the fore-runners of Scott. But Professor Herford ("The Age of Wordsworth") maintains that, in romance, Scott's art is inferior to hers, and that intellectually he is "fast-rooted in the eighteenth century." He is "the last and greatest of the race of realists and humorists who created the English novel."

There is some truth in this criticism. Scott does heir the traditions of eighteenth century realism; he possesses the humour and sense of Fielding. But just as we saw that there were fundamental differences which separated Mrs. Radcliffe from Fielding, so, too, Scott lives in a world which would be incomprehensible to the great English humorist. In Stevenson's "A Gossip on Romance" we are fortunate in possessing the Confession of Faith of a great romance writer, and we may employ it to test this last writer of the school of Fielding. Stevenson there pursues the fleeting shadow, Romance, and tries to give a definition. "Romance is the poetry of circumstance. . . . One thing calls for another; there is a fitness in events and places." These words contain the gist of the whole matter. The rest of the essay simply elaborates and illustrates

this susceptibility to the power of suggestion, and "the poetry of circumstance" would include the romantic effects both of the supernatural world and of the historic past. Let us set aside for the moment the novels themselves, and try to discover if Scott was personally subject to such romantic influences. We turn to the Journal (February, 1827) and we find: "From my childhood I have found something fearful, or melancholy at least, about a mill." All readers of "Ivanhoe" will remember Coningsburgh Castle. Here is an extract from a letter written in 1811: "I once flew past it on the mail-coach, when its round-towers and flying buttresses had a most romantic effect in the morning dawn." Or, finally, here is an extract from the Memoranda of Mr. Morritt: "He (Scott) was but half-satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect with it some local legend; and when I was forced sometimes to confess with the Knife-grinder, 'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir'—he would laugh and say, 'then let us make one—nothing so easy as to make a tradition.'" Can one think for a moment that Fielding ever looked upon a mill with fear, or that a castle-tower in the dawn moved him to mysterious feelings? Fielding can make a story, but he cannot 'make a tradition.' He who makes

a tradition must have intuitive knowledge of place and circumstance; at the hour must come the man. And for this happy skill it needs the romance writer.

The romantic art of the novels can only be considered along with their treatment of history. There is much destructive criticism of the historical romances, but it is often based upon misapprehension both of Scott's purpose and of his artistic genius. There are perhaps two schools of such critics. Sir Leslie Stephen, for example, condemns the historical novel altogether; it is "pure cram or else pure fiction." He will have nothing to do with "the amusing nonsense" of "Ivanhoe," and thinks that Scott ought to have confined his art to "the daylight of common sense and common nature." Sir Leslie Stephen is supported by the historians, who condemn Scott's inaccuracy. Here are some examples of his anachronisms. The historical basis of "Ivanhoe" is quite untrustworthy; in Richard's reign it was impossible that there could be a national Saxon party. In "The Talisman" Scotland and France are spoken of as if they were already firm allies, but the League dates only from the close of the thirteenth century. "Kenilworth" is laid in 1575, when Shakespeare was in his eleventh year. But in the novel he is present in the ante-chamber

of Lord Leicester, and is already the leading dramatist of the day; Raleigh recites a passage from "Midsummer-Night's Dream," and the songs of Caliban and Autolycus are sung by Wayland Smith. There is, moreover, little truth to history in "Redgauntlet" and "Woodstock." Such faults have led critics to agree with Sir Leslie Stephen in condemning the historical novel. Other writers like Taine criticise quite as severely Scott's handling of history, but do not therefore give up the cause of the historical novel. The historical novel can really be written, they think, if only the writer be accurate enough and picture the past in its completeness. Taine's quarrel with Scott is that he selects from history only what suits him, that he does not concern himself with the sensuality and brutality of the Middle Ages or with the epicureanism of the Renaissance. He holds that Scott's art is here purely artificial, and amounts at most to a talent of *mise en scène* and a passion for the picturesque. Finally, Taine is forced to fall back upon the opinion of Sir Leslie Stephen—that Scott is at bottom a realist and humorist, who had no business to write historical romances.

Neither Taine nor Sir Leslie Stephen observes, however, that Scott has two ways of looking at the past and two ways of treating it in fiction.

In the first place, he sees its romance. There is picturesqueness in place and costume; there is the inspiration of great names and great deeds; there is the charm of distance in time; there is the free play of passion, the stir of adventure, the trumpet-call of war. In the second place, the past is to him what Professor Herford calls "the present gone by." Hence comes his political philosophy and his sturdy Toryism. He is like Burke in his strong sense of the conservative tendencies in society. The great preacher of the crusade against the Revolution might have written this sentence in "Guy Mannering": "Even an admitted nuisance, of ancient standing, should not be abated without some caution." Society is to Scott a vast organism in which the parts are bound, each to each, by mutual services of long standing, which link them with the past. He praises Monkbarns' carrying the head of the dead fisherman, not only because it is an act of kindness, but also because it is the ancient office of the landlord. Thus the political philosophy of Scott and Burke is very similar. Both are keenly alive to the binding force of ancient institutions and the political value of class distinction; both, too, are attracted by the picturesqueness of such a society, and love an institution simply because it is old. But in Burke the statesman predominates, in Scott the artist.

Hence the organic view of society had great effect upon Scott's work. To him the past was not only a wonderland or a battlefield. He saw the society of the past organised in institutions which were powerful even in his own day, divided into classes which still retained their distinctive features, living a life which was rich in common custom and business and filled with a thousand interests, great and small. In his picture of the past, too, he could be realist and humorist.

These two ways of looking at the past led Scott to attempt two distinct kinds of historical fiction. Of course there is no absolute dividing-line, and the characteristics of one class appear in the other. "Ivanhoe" and "Old Mortality" are held in high esteem by lovers of Scott. But is there not a real distinction? The past of "Ivanhoe" is the romantic fighting time; the past of "Old Mortality" is "the present gone by." Stevenson may again help us here. For his own tale "The Black Arrow," which describes the fighting time of the Wars of the Roses, he invented, from a feature of the diction, the epithet of 'tushery.' But he never applied such an epithet to "The Adventures of David Balfour." Now, "Ivanhoe" is 'tushery,' but "Old Mortality," though a more ambitious work on a larger canvas, is like "David Balfour" in method. Owing to the author's

nationality, there is a tendency in the novels for Scottish history to become always "the present gone by," but the distinction is not altogether a distinction of nationality. Parts of "The Fair Maid of Perth," for example, are written in the "Ivanhoe" style, which again, is not the manner of "The Fortunes of Nigel." No general rule can be laid down to cover all cases. Perhaps the nearest approach to accuracy is to say that, when Scott writes of the Middle Ages, he writes novels of the "Ivanhoe" type; when he writes of the history of the sixteenth century and its successors, his novels resemble "Old Mortality."

For criticism, the importance of this distinction is that the strictures of critics like Taine and Sir Leslie Stephen apply chiefly to the "Ivanhoe" class, and yet, when they are applied, they lose most of their force. To criticise "Ivanhoe" as a false rendering of history, as only a partial representation of the Middle Ages, to declare, with Sir Leslie Stephen, that its characters are pure inventions, is, to use the words of Scott's own defence "to point a discharge of artillery against a wreath of morning mist." Scott would have admitted the truth of most of these criticisms. Probably Taine was right in thinking that Scott did not completely comprehend the Middle Ages; this imperfect sympathy lay, perhaps, at the root

of the distinction drawn above. He disliked Dante, and probably did not understand mediæval religious mysticism. Only once in "The Talisman" are the Crusaders seized with religious zeal. But he did know, as few of his contemporaries knew, the real state of mediæval society—the brutality, the injustice, the sternness and monotony of life. All this, however, was not to his purpose. "What signify dates in a true story?" he once exclaimed in the Journal, and so, too, he might say: "What signifies the unpleasant side of life in a fighting romance?" The effect Scott is aiming at in "Ivanhoe" is like that aimed at in "The Lady of the Lake." It is to be a tale of love and war and adventure; there will be wicked barons and brave young knights and generous outlaws, and high-spirited damsels; there will be adventures in the greenwood, and shattering of lances, and much of the pomp and splendour of chivalry. Such a romance is not among the very highest products of creative genius. It is in no way a complete picture either of England in the Middle Ages or of life at any time. The characters are frankly painted from the outside; for effect much reliance is placed upon costume and scenery. But who would have it otherwise? It is a legitimate form of art, with a certain limited purpose. Nowhere else, outside

actual mediæval romances, is there such an appeal to primal healthy instincts in the reader—his natural love of fighting, his reverence for fair women and brave men. It is pure healthy romance, free from tawdriness or nightmare or sentimentality.

But in novels like "Old Mortality" or "Nigel," while Scott still does justice to the romance of history, he represents fully the other side of life. Covenanters like Macbriar may endure torture for conscience' sake; staunch Tories like Major Bellenden may hold out to the last for Church and King. But there are also prudent men like Niel Blane of the Howff Inn, who send their meal to both parties and "keep a calm sough," and sceptics like Cuddie who are willing to keep the Church, pray for the King, "and drink his health into the bargain, when the ale's gude." In writing of history from the Renaissance onwards, Scott feels himself in touch with real life, and it is in these novels that he is able to make the past live and to exhibit his more realistic view of history. Hence, while such historical romances have the pathos of far-off things, while men and women are painted with the big brush, these novels are also pregnant with humour, rationalism, and closeness to actual fact. There Scott flings himself into his characters, and

into the mingled web of romance and realism he once more weaves his whole nature.

The historical novel, then, as written by Scott, seems to be a legitimate form of art. Professor Saintsbury ("Essays in English Literature," second series) has two interesting remarks upon this kind of fiction. Its success depends upon the existence of a distinct and critical notion of history, and upon its treatment of great historical personages according to the traditional view. Indeed, unless there is such a critical way of looking at the past as Professor Saintsbury thinks was supplied to Scott's readers by the historians of the previous century, the novel loses its peculiar effect and appears to the reader only an ordinary fiction. The second requirement for success is common to all art. Should drama or novel offend the general appreciation of an historical character, it is no longer a work of imagination but an argument, appealing to the critical instinct. On the whole, Scott is very successful in his rendering of history. He is on debateable ground in "Old Mortality"; but it is now admitted that his Covenanters are much more life-like than was at first supposed, and in Claverhouse he at least represented the traditional view of a party. Perhaps his greatest triumph in such portraiture is the Queen Mary of "The Abbot." The

reader's first idea of the Queen is drawn from Woodcock's picture of her as a young princess out hawking, happy as the day is long. It is a picture which abides in the reader's memory even when he comes to know the pale Queen, stricken with many sorrows and haunted by suspected crimes. She is never pronounced innocent, and in the terrible mental agony which follows the recollection of Darnley's murder she is almost self-convicted. But judgment is held in suspense, and what the reader remembers when he lays down the book is the Queen's beauty, her charm, her sorrows, and her pathetic declaration that she is only twenty-five! This is the Mary of tradition. Hence the distinctive charm of the historical novel is that it seems to combine fact and fiction in a way that tickles the intellectual palate. In conversation we are interested in a story if someone we know is an actor in it. Historical fiction has a like piquancy because it mingles men and women known to tradition and history with fictitious heroes and heroines and minor characters. The Waverley Novels, too, excel in all the other merits of the historical romance. There life is large and important; we learn what it is to be of some service to the state; we feel the fascination of great causes and great leaders, the reviving influence of the liberty of wide spaces in time

and distance. There we breathe an ampler ether, a diviner air.

It was not unimportant that the great writer of historical romances was born and bred a Scotsman. No country has had a more romantic history. In the popular mind Andrew Fairservice's 'sad and sorrowfu' union,' immense as was its effect upon the country's future, has little importance. To the people their story is that of a struggle for independence, waged against great odds, and of the lost causes of a fair queen and a gallant prince, consecrated by sorrow and defeat. Any Scotsman with blood in his veins must have written of his country's history in the spirit of romance. But Scott's work was much more than what, in the Introduction to the Minstrelsy, he declared it to be; "An offering to the Manes of a kingdom." To quote Taine, he gave Scotland once for all the right of citizenship in literature. Every reader of Lockhart will remember the conversation on the Mound at Edinburgh, in which Scott, replying to Jeffrey's light banter upon projects of reform, exclaimed, not without tears: "No, no, 'tis no laughing matter; little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland will remain." Some of us may take exception to Scott's view

of the Whig party. But if such destruction were their purpose, he has himself foiled the enemy. No, Sir Walter, what makes Scotland Scotland cannot be destroyed or undermined! For the Waverley Novels will be read as long as English literature endures, and there the Scottish character and speech and humour will preserve their nationality for ever.

But it is not only in the large romantic effects of history that Scott excels. Through the pages of all his novels blow the fresh breezes of romance, and diffuse their benefits with the fine carelessness of nature. To any man of imagination a journey is romantic, for it is a progress into the unknown. Hence the journeys in Scott's novels—and many of the novels are simply glorified journeys—are always written with delight, a delight which almost finds a conscious expression in Darsie Latimer's love of truantry. He achieves great triumphs in that poetry of circumstance and fitness of things of which Stevenson wrote. Stevenson himself pointed out the magic of the landing scene in "Guy Mannering." But other scenes are in circumstance scarcely less poetic. Quentin reading in the hall of Schonwaldt the old 'romant,'

> How the Squire of lowe degree
> Loved the King's daughter of Hongarie;

Nigel in the lonely Alsatian house, beaten upon

by the wind-driven rain, reading by the guttering candle tales of crimes soon to be perpetrated in his presence; old Elspeth singing in her death-hour, of the devotion of her forebears to Glenallan's Earl; Madge Wildfire's swan song of 'Proud Maisie'—these are scenes which touch the heart of suggestion and hint at far-away meanings in things. Sight and sound have their romantic charm. Who ever forgets the beat of the drums at night in "Old Mortality," or the flash of the beacon in "Peveril"! Romantic, too, is the effective contrast of men and women who seem to represent worlds as far apart as planet from planet. The back-ground of "The Pirate" is sea-girt Orcadia, peopled by kindly fisher-folk or simple tacksmen. But on the high cliffs dwells Norna, her brain quick with memories of the Norsemen, her lips moving with their spells; at times the old world of the Vikings seems to come again. With song and jest and interminable tale Claud Halero transports the reader to the gay and witty London of 'glorious John' and the Restoration. And who are these swarthy men upon the sands, full of strange oaths and stranger tales of the Spanish Main, uncouth in garb, rude in manner, sudden in quarrel? The anomalies of the situation do not merely affect the reader. It is the mystery, the 'something rich and strange,'

in Cleveland that attracts the imaginative Minna. It is the subduing stillness of the island atmosphere which makes Cleveland so out of love with his former life.

These triumphs are achieved unconsciously, and many of the most romantic scenes are carelessly constructed and confused with inappropriate elements. Scott does not surrender himself whole-heartedly to the romantic view of life; and this critical attitude, and not only the carelessness which Stevenson censures, has a tendency to mar the perfection of pure romance. The humorist and realist are, at times, too strong for the poet. Very characteristic is his treatment of the supernatural. Scott was capable of feeling supernatural fear, and has told the story of his terror during a stay at Glamis Castle. But his usual attitude is that of the patronising unbeliever. Most men take a sort of benevolent interest in the fancies of childhood. In a similar way Scott is interested in belief in the supernatural as characteristic of a more primitive people or of earlier times. His own attitude is rationalistic. Let anyone read closely Scott's studies of the supernatural and he will find that, in very many cases, the author unobtrusively detaches himself for a moment from his narrative, and explains strange occurrences in a natural fashion. Thus

the vision of blind Alice at the fountain—the only purely supernatural occurrence in "The Bride"—is apologised for as occurring in the original story; it is hinted that the apparitions in "The Betrothed" are merely dreams; and while Norna's information is never fully explained, one has always the suspicion that it may all be due to her paid agents, and to her knowledge of the weather, the country, and men and women. Scott's disbelief has its unfortunate side. Lack of sympathy leads to such an unfortunate creation as the White Lady of Avenel. Some of the scenes in which she appears are in his very best style. When she reveals to Halbert and Edward that their restless thoughts are due to love of Mary and envy of one another, there is the suggestion that here the supernatural world represents the play of outer circumstances bringing into clear consciousness thoughts long dormant. But Scott's artistic carelessness combines with his disbelief to make of this beautiful spirit sprung from a star-distilled drop of diamond-dew, a player of practical jokes, a meddler in state-affairs, a missionary in the Protestant cause!

The best side of Scott's union of realism and romance was that he saw the *relative* truth of the supernatural. By imaginative sympathy he can enter into the feelings of such a society as could

believe in supernatural beings and powers, so that there seems no improbability or rudeness in them. The island-society of the Orkneys is an atmosphere charged with weird belief. There is nothing distorted, nothing unreal, in such a background, and there one naturally believes in Norna. Without actual intrusion of the other world, too, Scott can produce, by subtle hints, the impression that a man is struggling against an unseen force. Ravenswood's love is doomed from the beginning; family feud, political difference, poverty, his own unreasonable pride and passion, the character of Lucy, are obstacles which he cannot sweep away. Now Scott lets the reader know that the lovers are struggling against forces too strong for them, but he does so, not as an historian, but as an imaginative artist. The shrivelling of Edgar's severed lock in the fire as he vows vengeance on the Ashton family, the strange prophecy so emphatic on the lips of old Caleb, the dim forebodings of blind Alice, the horrid utterances of the three hags, the continual reference to witchcraft—all this produces the impression of a ruthless hidden power, working in secret. When the storm bursts there is no surprise; we have long seen the cloud draw near. Finally, Scott's greatest success in treatment of the supernatural is acknowledged to be " Wander-

ing Willie's Tale." Perhaps he succeeded here because he wrote of the demon world in the manner of the great Scottish writers from Dunbar to Burns—with bristling hair and leering eye, with fearful reverence and comical contempt, with ludicrous horror and familiar fear.

Scott, then, is neither a Fielding nor a Maturin. If he has not Fielding's constructive skill, he has his large humour and wise strength. But unlike Fielding he is alive to what is beyond common things and yet is suggested by them. Still he never dwells in the clouds, or in the realm of nightmare. Such romance becomes thin, vapid, unreal. Life is a large thing in the Waverley Novels because it is whole. It is well that we should admire the beauty of a Highland loch. But Scott thinks the Bailie's calculation of how many acres of plough-lands the draining of the loch would yield, also demands some consideration. Life in the novels is fresh, interesting, full of infinite suggestiveness, liberal, beautiful; but it is also serious, sane, comical, sad. Here is the romance of realism and the realism of romance. Construction is careless, conjuncture imperfect, faults manifold. Yet perhaps only 'a great romantic, an idle child' could have given us so spacious a play-ground, in which we may wander and not grow weary.

CHAPTER V.

THE WAVERLEY NOVELS: CHARACTER, HUMOUR, TRAGEDY, RELIGION.

> Those plots I praise, and this man's ordered style
> Dressed up in terms most elegant, most apt,
> But, by your leave, my favourite's men and women
> Excel their wire-pulled figures as living beings
> Do straw-stuffed puppets; they do move, sing, dance,
> Call from you peals of laughter, even draw
> A tear from the unwilling eye. *Old Play.*

EVERY reader of the Introduction to the "Tales of the Crusaders" will remember that, at the famous meeting of share-holders summoned to form a company for the publication of "the class of works called the Waverley Novels," a message was received from Mr. Hermann Dousterswivel. His proposal was "that some part of the labour of composing these novels might be saved by the use of steam." When this proposal roused some opposition, especially on the part of Mr. Oldbuck, the Eidolon of the author attempted to calm the storm by the following statement: "This

mechanical operation can only apply to those parts of the narrative which are at present composed out of commonplaces, such as the love-speeches of the hero, the description of the heroine's person, the moral observations of all sorts, and the distribution of happiness at the conclusion of the piece." Scott, of course, is here in his usual bantering humour, and is not to be taken too seriously. Still, it is not his custom to ridicule what he values most highly, and he probably held in little esteem the part of his work which he was willing to resign to the steam-engine. Indeed here, as often in his humorous introductions, he is an admirable self-critic, and his summary of the commonplace features of his work has forestalled the objections of his many commentators.

For, first of all, his unfortunate heroes have incurred almost universal censure. Insipid, priggish, cold, wooden, are a few of the terms which are applied to them. Many deserve the censure. Perhaps the only writer who has put in a word of defence is Hazlitt. He maintains ("On Heroes in Novels") that readers expect too much of the hero of a novel. "Does it not seem as if this character, who is to conciliate all suffrages and concentrate all interests, must really have nothing in him to please or give offence, but is left with a few recommendations and good

qualities that the reader may improve upon at will?" Now, this may not have been Scott's theory, but it was certainly his practice. Some are gallant enough young fellows; such characters are a necessary part of the artistic conception of the pure romance of chivalry. Who is foolish enough to quarrel with Wilfrid of Ivanhoe or Quentin Durward? He who does so has not entered into the spirit of the tale, which is like a mediæval romance in its bounty to the fortunate youth. Other heroes are less pleasing. Nigel Oliphant has suffered sorely at the hands of critics. But he has more character, even if it be bad character, than the others. He has some very unpleasant features—sensitive conceit, fear of ridicule, pride of rank. But these features, as drawn by Scott, are seen to be the mere accidents of self-conscious youth, marring a character really worthy. It would have been easy to make such a youth ridiculous; but Scott's sympathetic picture is the work of a wise, strong man. Still, as a rule his heroes have to be taken on trust They are not heroic. They are only more or less agreeable young gentlemen, pleasantly featured and sufficiently accomplished, who walk through their parts in the novels with amazing unconcern. They are cold because Scott often uses them as mere points of view. On the great public

questions which agitate the world of the novels they are the commentators, the critics, the weighers of sentiment and reason. To be so young they are wonderfully dispassionate and, on the whole, discriminating judges of politics. It is perhaps because Scott was accustomed to decide otherwise and to let himself be swayed by old prejudice, that he is so out of sympathy with his bloodless heroes.

Nor have Scott's heroines won much affection from his readers. Ruskin has paid a tribute to their salutary influence and moral force; but he is evidently not so much attracted by Scott's individual women as by his general conception of womanhood as the embodiment of passive strength and healing power. Here, if anywhere, Scott fashions his characters "from the skin, inwards." Isobel, Eveline, Rowena, Edith Plantagent—they are all beautiful, amiable, agreeable in conversation. But surely Ruskin has given too high praise. Their strength is often apparent only, for they are not really subjected to severe trial. How different their influence from that of a Helena or a Cordelia? Yet here, too, the distinction between the pure romance of chivalry and the more realistic novel holds good to some extent, for Die Vernon, Lilias Redgauntlet, and Jeanie Deans are much superior to their sisters in "Ivanhoe," or "Quentin Durward" or "The

Talisman." One might then deprecate much of this hostile criticism. It holds good, but, when the nature of the chivalrous romance is remembered, it does not matter. The heroine in the tales of chivalry has fulfilled her purpose; she has been beautiful and interesting enough to fight for, kind enough to marry the hero in the last chapter. Hutton's criticism seems very accurate; it *is* because Scott has too chivalrous an idea of woman that he fails in his heroines. But let this goddess descend from her pedestal into the tangled world of affairs; let her, like Die, have something of the boy in her composition and yet remain ever so womanly; let her, like Jeanie Deans, be presented with a great moral problem which would appeal to men and women alike; let her, like Lilias, play a part in the world of politics and face the danger of rude adventure;—then woman is no more a glorified image, but a charming companion, a wise counsellor, a partner in the business of life. It is in such situations, where women may be drawn in outline, and broad general features easily expressed, that male novelists, unless they be men of exceptional intuition, have been most successful in depicting women.

A novelist with so little interest in hero and heroine naturally wrote no great love-story.

There is passion in "The Bride of Lammermoor"; the yielding to tenderness of a strong nature like Die Vernon's is inexpressibly touching; many of the love-scenes have a pleasing enough atmosphere of romance. But, as a rule, neither author nor reader is interested. The tender speech, the clasp of hand in hand, leave us cold and unmoved. "There are perhaps such things," says Bagehot, "as the love-affairs of immortal beings; no one would learn it from Scott." In his novels no Romeo and Juliet utter their passion to the night air, no Richard and Lucy make love in the meadows as if they would never be old. In "The Monastery" and "The Betrothed" Scott is so careless that there is not a single scene between the lovers in whom he expects the readers to be interested, and their love can only be learned from hints and side-remarks! Yet his ideal of love was high. In "The Abbot" (vol. ii. p. 194) Catherine Seyton tells Roland what love should be: "Believe me, they think vilely and falsely of women—I mean of those who deserve the name—who deem that they love the gratification of their vanity, or the mean purpose of engrossing a lover's admiration and affection, better than they love the virtue and honour of the man they may be brought to prefer. He that serves his religion, his prince, and his country, with ardour

and devotion, need not plead his cause with the commonplace rant of romantic passion—the woman whom he honours with his love, becomes his debtor, and her corresponding affection is engaged to repay his glorious toil." Here love passes into public service. The speech is typical of Scott's whole attitude to the commonplace machinery of the novel. The hero, the heroine, the love-story, are not his main interests; what attracts him is the big world where men and women play a part in state-affairs, or the everyday life around him, so humorous and yet so pathetic in its endless combinations. It must be remembered, too, that the greatest love-stories probably embody the dreams of a man's youth, and that Scott was a middle-aged country gentleman and lawyer when he began to write the novels. There is a trace of the easy tolerance of the middle-aged man of the world in his attitude to these young people who think the state of their hearts so important. He recognises the passion as very fit and proper for people of their age. But it does not matter very much; they will soon settle down, and take life less strenuously, and know better.

Not only in the Introduction to "The Betrothed" does Scott laugh at his ill-success in the conventional parts of the novel. In a

letter to Ellis written in January, 1813, he bewails his short-comings in character-drawing, and attributes them to his cattle-stealing ancestry. "The worst," he writes, "of all my undertakings is that my rogue, always in despite of me, turns out my hero." Here again Scott puts criticism on the right track. He was writing, of course, of "Rokeby," but the words apply much more closely to the novels. What he really means to indicate here is the sort of character in which he is interested. The traditional place of the hero is never actually usurped; the excellent young man is allowed to walk along his beaten track and win or lose the amiable heroine. But it is not to such characters that the author surrenders himself. The men who interest him are noble rogues like Rob Roy or Nanty Ewart, soldiers of fortune like Claverhouse or Dugald Dalgetty, men of humour like Oldbuck or the Bailie. His remark in the letter is, indeed, not sufficiently comprehensive. The truth is that the character he best understands must be mature and well-developed, with well-defined characteristics and strong features. Men and women who have the stamp of their trade or profession, who exhibit any idiosyncracy or oddity of mind, or to whom way of life and uncommon experience have given a peculiar way of thinking—these are the charac-

ters of the Waverley Novels who have earned a place in the living world of literature.

In such characterisation Scott best displays his humour. He writes no comedies; he constructs no comic plots. The subtlety of a writer like Mr. Meredith, who can make a comic conception of character the hinge upon which turns the plot of a book like "The Egoist," or a tailor who dies on the first page the greatest influence and the greatest character of a book like "Evan Harrington," is no part of Scott's genius. But in broad, genial, shrewd comic characterisation he is almost unsurpassed. The incongruity of temperament and circumstance, of youth and age, of profession and practice; the whimsicality of a hobby carried to excess or of an indiscriminating devotion; the ludicrousness of misplaced sentiment and hot-headed zeal—he sees the humour of it all and paints it with broad, firm brush. Delicate shades of ridicule, subtle touches of fun which titillate the laughter-loving spirit, escape from him. Lockhart tells us that he was not a sensitive man, and was conscious only of strong scents and clear sounds. In the spiritual world he shows, with some remarkable exceptions, the same lack of acute consciousness. On the whole, in humour as in history he could only do "the Big Bow-Wow." Yet here again his method has

compensations. A writer intensely conscious of what is ridiculous is inclined to fool his readers to the top of his bent, to be the wit who follows his humorous fancy at the expense of truth to life and sanity of sentiment. Scott looking at life with the eyes of a humorist, not of a wit, paints it with the calm aloofness of one who sees the humorous incongruity passing into the tragic. He is most like Shakespeare in his blending of humour and pathos. The tow-wig, Law-Latin, small-beer and self-importance of Peter Peebles, are sufficiently comic. Yet one pities the poor wretch. He is almost a pathetic figure, not because he is poor and wretched, but because the buffets of fortune have not taught him the mercy which seasons justice. He is still the same self-seeker who turned Ewart's land-lady into the street. Caleb Balderstone, again, is an unselfish Falstaff in his endless expedients for the honour of the family. But his devotion gives him a pathetic significance. We do not smile when we remember the faithful old man watching the threshold of his master's chamber, or drawing the feather from the streaming tide. Tears, not laughter, come to us then.

Criticism must linger over Scott's characterisation, for it is the most valuable part of his work. Even critics like Taine who accuse Scott's men

and women of being artificial, refute their own statements by admitting that his name calls up a whole world of characters. A few broad types may be specified. Nothing shows better his objective view of life than his picture of Scots law and lawyers. It was only pique and disappointed ambition that made Scott at times deride the law. In reality he was a sound and able lawyer, whose services as Sheriff of Selkirk won a well-deserved tribute from the inhabitants of the county. Scots law he loved as a most characteristic national institution, and the men of the robe in Scotland were among his dearest friends. Yet of no profession has he given such a ludicrous picture. He does justice to its serious and practical side; it is this law which threatens Sir Arthur Wardour's estate and condemns Effie Deans to death. But what he really delights in are the humours of the profession. It is humorous that a man should be a leading figure in a sober and serious calling and yet a reveller and sharer in 'high jinks'; that the legal terms which come as fitly from a stately Clerk of Session should be babbled, in season and out of season, by a crazed and drunken pauper, that the assiduity of attention and legal memory which make a great advocate should be the whim and pastime of a conceited saddler. Far be it from Scott to deny the import-

ance of law. But if it be given too important a place, or the chief place, there is incongruity, humour. And thus the author smiles when Bailie M'Wheeble exclaims: "an his honour winna believe the Leviticus, he might aye believe the Statute-book."

It is in the portraiture of character which is distinctively Scottish that the author's power of characterisation is at its height. With what large tolerance and imaginative sympathy he enters into the bourgeois and peasant life of his country! Dandie Dinmont, Bailie Nicol Jarvie, Dugald Dalgetty, are all of the bourgeois type, somewhat vulgar in mind, in manners, in expression. But not for a moment is the novelist's attitude that of intellectual superiority or caustic satire. He loves such men and enters into their life with the delight of a humorist. In other hands the Bailie might easily become an unattractive figure. He is a shrewd, industrious business man, with the precise and punctual habits of his class, a strict Presbyterian, a rigid keeper of the Sabbath, a hater of theatres and all their works. The romantic side of life or nature has no attraction for him; he has no comprehension of the dignity of the Highland character, above whose Honour he places his own idol, Credit. Such a man might easily win dislike or ridicule. But is there a reader

of "Rob Roy" who does not both like and respect the Bailie? Scott is alive to the advantages of the practical nature; the Bailie has a statesman-like sense of the good of the Union, and if he is dead to much that is noble in the Highland character, he has sincere pity for the Celtic people and an earnest desire to find them honest employment. Thus he wins our respect. Moreover, placed in circumstances where his 'mechanical notions' are of no avail and the pen must be exchanged for the poker, he is a most comical figure and therefore, as is the case with all men at whom we laugh heartily, really liked. He is brave as a lion, never more so than when he protests against the murder of Morris; generous and warm-hearted, as is proved by his kindness to Frank and to Mattie; devoted to the memory of his worthy father; proud of his civic position. Most humanly consistent in his inconsistency, the democratic merchant has a secret pride in his gentle connection. Here is a real, living man. Nor is Dugald Dalgetty any less human. He is a distant relation of Jack Falstaff, with a like philosophy which reconciles the inconsistencies of life and especially the conflicting merits of Pay and Honour. He is a rude, vulgar soldier, shameless, vain, loquacious, pedantic and greedy. But he is also brave, faithful to his pay-masters,

generous to his friends, kind to his horse, full of resource, wit, and knowledge of the world. The genius of his creator has united all these characteristics in one most natural and most likeable soldier. Finally, this born sceptic is exhibited by Scott's delightful irony as still possessing the Scottish attachment to a family estate, and willing to undergo the ordeal of marriage with an Aberdeen Covenanter's widow to secure his old lands of Drumthwacket!

One remark applies to all Scott's men of this type; they are at bottom thoroughly good fellows. When the Bailie says: "I canna meddle wi' a friend's business but I aye end wi' making it my ain"; when Dandie Dinmont refuses to employ his wealth to over-reach Jock o' Dawston Cleugh in the plea about the land which feeds "a hog or aiblins twa in a good year"; when Hobbie Eliot, saved from ruin by the Dwarf's gift, exclaims: "It's a queer thing, but I canna joy in the gear unless I ken'd the puir body was happy that gave it me":—we are subdued by the natural goodness of these men and understand the constraint they lay upon the affection of the writer.

Nowadays the Scots peasant is a familiar figure in literature. But none of his modern painters deserves to be mentioned in the same breath with

Scott, who paints him absolutely as he is, with no false sentiment or extravagance. He has a perfect understanding of the genius of the poorer children of the Scottish soil. Centuries of national adversity during which life was hard at home and the national honour hard to maintain abroad, have stamped the people with the character which men like Cuddie Headrigg and Richie Moniplies and Andrew Fairservice display. It is a character easy to laugh at. But it has a philosophy of its own. Truth and honour and kindness to one's neighbour are good things; they must be observed, or else the hell of Calvin awaits us. But men, struggling for a livelihood in a poor country, are natural enemies. This circumstance must affect our conduct; if we are asked our business, the questioner must be put off by indirect answers or led into self revelation by an interrogatory reply. Though poor, we are as good as our neighbours and ought to assert our self-consequence even in high places. Englishmen are certain to insult our country; patriotic pride will excuse us if we depart from the strict truth and maintain that the lanes of Edinburgh are finer than the broad highways on the banks of Thames. We must not be misunderstood; we are really worthy men, though a stranger may think we seek goodness in a very roundabout

fashion. This is the basis of the Scots peasant character as conceived by Scott. He has an immense liking for such a type, for if it is capable of descending to meanness and self-interest, it is also capable of rising to great heights of devotion. It is true that, while Cuddie is altogether pleasing, Andrew Fairservice has some very unpleasant traits. His caution becomes cowardice when he retires behind a barrel at fighting-time; his learning pedantry when it consists of the knowledge of the botanical names of flowers; his financial ability deceit when he sells his master's apples or steals his mare. Yet Scott—and every sympathetic reader—has a sneaking affection for the rogue. For at bottom he, too, is a humorist, and in the solution of his humour he dissolves many faults. He did dispose of his master's mare. But he is no thief. He is really the benefactor of that extravagant young gentleman, Mr. Frank Osbaldistone. "The horse was expensive to keep at livery"! Aye, Andrew Fairservice, thou art a man much misunderstood!

For comic effect, then, Scott depends mainly on character-drawing. He makes only one important departure from this general rule. Sometimes he employs humorous 'type-names,' which label a man with his character or trade. One might construct a Jonsonian comedy, a "Waverley

Fair," with such people. The Jonsonian flavour is in no way spoiled by the Scots dialect, for Jonson's masques are full of such dialectical variations. We need not invent a plot for this comedy, but we may at least describe the groups. Heedless of the noisy surroundings, Heavysterne, Dryasdust, and Mumblazon are discussing an intricate point of heraldry, often interrupted by the loquacious Clutterbuck and sublimely ignored by Cleishbotham, who would like to cane the small boys who are throwing nut-shells. Not far away M'Turk and Touchwood are engaged in a violent altercation with Sir Peter Peppercorn and Sir Mungo Malagrowther; Sweep-clean, the bailiff, prompted by the attorney, Win-the-fight, is hurrying up to arrest the first man who breaks the peace, while Raredrench, the apothecary, is preparing his plasters in expectation of a purchase. At Pindivide's stall Holdforth and Poundtext are overwhelming the unfortunate Episcopalian, Dummerar, with arguments on the meaning of effectual calling. Jack Bunce and Wildrake have just been signing bills in the office of the old usurer Trapbois; Woodcock, the jolly falconer, is treating his fellow-servant, David Dibble, the gardener, at Mrs. Shortcake's stall, and Whitecraft, the miller, who has ridden into town on one of Briddlesley's horses, is having a stirrup mended

by Saddletree. There seems, however, to be some trouble brewing, for the lawyers—Fairscribe, Doublefee, and Bindlose—have come together out of the crowd and are consulting with serious faces. The bailiffs are coming now; all must go before the magistrate. And to give a true comedy decision which shall dispel all the troubles of "Waverley Fair," who is so fit as Justice Blindas?

One class of Scott's characters surpasses those of any other English writer. His love for animals has given to the dogs and horses of his novels an almost human interest. Ban and Bus-car, Fangs, Bevis, Lufra; Dumple, Rosabelle, Gustavus; these dogs and horses are our friends almost as much as their owners. Chaucer has an eye for the points of a horse, but the Seaman's rouncy and the Reve's Scott have not the individuality of Dumple and Gustavus and Rory Bean. Scott's dogs are studies from the life; Bevis is an immortal portrait of the well-loved Maida. His treatment of the attitude of his characters to dumb animals is admirable. He loves to make a man express his better nature in this way. The tenderness underlying the stern character of David Deans reveals itself in his care for Effie's cow. Dandie Dinmont shows his affection for young Bertram by kindness to his terrior, Wasp. Hobbie Eliot can think of no way of requiting the Dwarf's

generosity but by taking charge of his goat and bees. Gurth is only really angry with Cedric when he flings his javelin at Fangs.

Here there is sound psychology, accurate observation, dramatic insight. A critic like Professor Herford, who maintains that in these respects Scott's gifts are very ordinary, might object that such observation as we have noted is the natural gift of a sportsman and country gentleman. But Scott shows the same power in departments of life which are closed to the observation of the ordinary type of Tweedside laird. His treatment of abnormal characters like Madge Wildfire and Wamba shows a subtlety very different from his usual blunt perception. Having a very sound understanding of all that is normal, sane, and orderly, he has a wonderful comprehension of the opposed world of extravagance, illusion, and disorder. Wamba and Madge Wildfire have extraordinary insight, quickness, and cunning. Their minds form fantastic notions which represent general truth in a vivid fashion; Wamba's philological lecture or his account of the outlaw's arithmetic is a good example. But, at the same time, they are partly foolish, and the disturbance which follows the incapacity for connected thinking is seen in Wamba's restlessness on horseback or Madge's aimless wandering. Both are subject

to the touches of nature which make the sane and the insane kin; Wamba shows invincible fidelity to master and fellow-servant, and poor Madge has a confused memory of a drink of milk once given her by Jeanie Deans. Scott understands, too, that an insane person is, as it were, an artist in life, conscious of the æsthetic aspect of things. Madge has almost a poet's pleasure in a moon-lit landscape, and the genius of a dramatist in devising a scene.

But there are a thousand touches and suggestions in the novels which show that Scott, far more than criticism generally admits, has investigated many of the most curious corners and recesses of the human mind. He deserves a high place among the masters of dramatic psychology. Wildrake, the jovial, careless, kind-hearted spendthrift, is adored by all children. Wayland Smith, the strong physical nature, has an almost overwhelming horror of Alasco, the poisoner. Alasco, the cheating astrologer and rogue, has a real belief in the philosopher's stone. Antony Foster, a bad man and the servant of bad men, has strong faith in the worth of religion, and a hope that he may be saved by the piety of his daughter. Catherine Seyton, the worshipper of Queen Mary, the inciter to great deeds, falters in her high resolution when she

thinks that she may be sending her lover into danger. Rashleigh, the deformed plausible scoundrel, charms his victims by the mellow beauty of his voice as does the serpent by the waving to and fro of its head. The influence of descent or of external surroundings is not lost sight of. Julia Mannering has a decided resemblance to her foolish mother and also something of her father's self-will; Dumbiedykes, the purely passive mind, very naturally marries the lady who sits next him in church. The reader of the novels receives a strong impression of vast resources waiting to be developed. Often a character, introduced for only a few pages, strikes us as so rich and original that we desire his better acquaintance. Luke Lundin, the steward and physician of Kinross, and Blinkhoolie, the philosophic gardener; Barbara Suddlechop and Laurie Linklater; Johnny Mortheuch, the sexton in "The Bride"; John Davis, the worthy guard of the fishing-station in "Redgauntlet"—it is only a writer of the greatest creative genius who is able to give individuality to minor characters such as these.

Scott is not among the supreme writers of tragedy, and, indeed, he does not often aim at tragic effect. But he is capable of conceiving pure and poignant tragedy both of character and

circumstance. "The Bride of Lammermoor," his most ambitious attempt in this manner, is not perhaps his most successful, for although there is tragic pathos in Lucy's Desdemona-like helplessness and inward turn of thought, still Sir Leslie Stephen's criticism of the author's interest in Ravenswood as divided between the decayed gentleman and the lover, has much force. The plot of "St. Ronan's Well," too, was robbed of its tragic effect by James Ballantyne's interference. But "The Highland Widow" and "The Two Drovers" are tragedies of great power, the latter of which is haunted from the very first by a sense of impending doom. Perhaps the most pathetic figures Scott ever drew are Elspat, unable to conform to new ideas her conception of Highland honour and all that makes a man, and driving her son to crime and death; Hamish, standing between the old and the new, torn by filial devotion and military discipline; Robin Oig M'Combich, the noble and generous Highlander, overwhelmed in the world-old tragedy of the clash of rival codes of honour. There are two well-known characters in the novels who gain in value if their tragic significance be noted. One is the Templar, Brian de Bois-Guilbert. He is ruthless, ambitious, passionate, stained with crime. But the greatness of his ambition, his courage, constancy, and force

of mind, win the respect of the reader, and a touch of pathos is added to his character because his sternness springs not from natural perversity, but the disappointment which followed the treachery of his early love. Into this man's life comes Rebecca, the Jewess. Henceforth his soul is the seat of a terrible struggle of good and evil. Long-dead impulses live again; during these passion-tossed days at Templestowe he is really a better man than he has been for years. This love for Rebecca seems to be his ruin, but it really saves him. For when he enters the lists against Ivanhoe the struggle of good and evil within him is not over; his better nature has not yet yielded; in the throes of that mighty conflict he dies. Here is the tragedy of a great spirit. Scott's other study in the tragedy of a soul is Nanty Ewart. His life-history is sad enough—an old father's heart broken, a woman brought to poverty and death, a young girl ruined and led into sin, a career of crime on the Spanish Main, great gifts sapped by drunkenness and lack of self-control. Yet the consecrating and redeeming influences of life have never lost their hold upon this wild sailor. No bad man could be so blighted with remorse. The crimes of his youth have been the result of carelessness, or ill-fortune, or hot blood. At bottom he is a generous, truth-

loving soul, faithful to his word, ready to help a friend, absolutely unselfish. Placed in a position where his honour is rooted in dishonour, where he must protect Jacobites whom he detests and serve faithfully masters he despises, he hides the misery of his heart beneath a jaunty wit and assumed bravado. Just at a time when his self-confession to Alan has led him to see clearly the trend of his life, comes the crisis of Nixon's temptation. Then, in a moment, the better side of the man triumphs, and like Webster's Bosola, a much worse man, he takes his stand, once and for all, on the side of the good. His death is the tragic redemption of a soul.

Only a spiritual nature could conceive such a tragedy. Scott's comprehension of the spiritual world is limited. The intellectual speculation, the probing self-examination of a Hamlet, lie beyond the reach of his genius; to-day this is what we miss most. He is unconscious of such impulses in himself, and does not understand them in other men. Nor does he concern himself with theological code or theory; both as man and novelist he acquiesces in an easy religious conventionality. But the author of the Waverley Novels was a religious man in the most intimate sense of the term. In the moral order of the universe he has a profound belief. Even a

fighting romance like "Ivanhoe" has its ethical interest. The knights seek the good in their chivalrous code, the outlaws in their 'fair dealing,' the serfs in their loyalty to Cedric; Rebecca and the Templar have to consider the moral worth of self-interest. "The Heart of Midlothian," although its primary motive is purely artistic, is a noble imaginative sermon on the retribution which follows sin. Madge Wildfire has an ethical as well as an æsthetic significance. As a girl she had been seduced by Staunton, and the trouble which followed the murder of her child had driven her into poverty and crazed her brain. Now she flits across the stage of the novel like the Nemesis which follows crime or the remorse which haunts a sin-stricken mind. It is she who steals Effie's child; it is her mother who almost foils Jeanie's plan of rescue. The guilty Staunton cannot rest until he finds the child of his sin; he does so only to be slain by him in the scene of his former smuggling exploits. All through this novel one feels that the moralist who lies hid in the brain of great Scottish writers, is working in this unconscious sort of way; if only the plot could have been worked out in other fashion a shallower writer would probably have made Jeanie 'splendide mendax' for her sister's sake.

Finally, "the distribution of happiness at the

end of the piece" was one of the departments of his work, which Scott was willing to resign to the steam-engine. If we take him seriously, he was here doing himself a great injustice. Often his picture of the issues of life is marred by carelessness and respect for convention. Or sometimes he plays the part of a kindly Providence to his characters. He treats young Quentin in this way—"a moral of excellent tendency for the encouragement of all fair-haired, blue-eyed, long-legged, stout-hearted emigrants from my native country." For a chivalrous tale of this kind the moral is admirable. But elsewhere he rises to a finer and spiritual conception of the righteous inequality of the distribution of happiness. Rebecca is the stock example of such treatment, and in the "Ivanhoe" preface Scott has defended his conception in noble terms. Less often noticed is Minna, in "The Pirate." Happiness of the ordinary type could not be for her. There was something unnatural in the passion for Cleveland: "the gods are deaf to hot and peevish vows." But Scott, understanding the purification which sorrow brings to such a nature, turns round upon the reader and declares that she did attain true happiness. In one of the few lucid moments of the last sad days at Abbotsford, Scott exclaimed to Lockhart: "My dear, be a good man—be

virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here." The man who in his dying days placed such value upon goodness, was the author of the Waverley Novels.

EPILOGUE

It is not our purpose to trace the followers and imitators of Walter Scott. They are an innumerable multitude, worthy and unworthy, and without detailed treatment selection would be invidious. The lines with which Drayton closes his epistle to Reynolds may here serve our turn:

> "Upon our stages in these latter days
> There are so many, let them have their bays
> That do deserve them; let those wits that haunt
> Those public circuits, let them freely chaunt
> Their fine composures and their praise pursue."

Could great writers live again, perhaps nothing would please Scott more than the way in which his compatriots in literature have looked up to him as the king of Scottish letters. It is not uninteresting to note that the Appin Murder was first told to the reading public in the preface of "Rob Roy," and that David Balfour has followed Lovel and Oldbuck to the Hawes Inn. Stevenson thought that a Scottish writer's greatest merit was

to be worthy of the praise of Scott, and wrote to Mr. J. M. Barrie: "There are two of us now that the Shirra might have patted on the head."

We have surveyed Scott's work as a writer of fiction, finding much to blame, much more to praise. And yet, when writing of his work, one must always come back to the man. Even Carlyle is subdued by the force of his personal worth, and led to exclaim: "No sounder piece of British manhood was put together in that eighteenth century of time." His life-story must always be a stimulus to all who love brave and enduring men. Long ago, in some lines of "Marmion" which no one seems to have remarked, he predicted his own fate:

> "Our youthful summer oft we see
> Dance by on wings of game and glee,
> While the dark storm reserves its rage
> Against the winter of our age."

The record of the fortitude and courage with which the old fighter faced the tempest is one of the heroic stories of literature.

But we need not go to the external record of his life to understand the worth of the man. His strong personality pervades and informs the novels. There we may share his unrivalled conversation, enter into his kindly humour, appreciate his shrewd estimate of men and things,

be braced by his vigorous courage and mental health. The reading of a Waverley Novel is a journey with one of the most charming comrades in the world.

Human friendship is perhaps the most valuable thing in life. But disposition and fancy change, or wishing having no body in it, may fail to transcend the distances of time and space. It is the glory of intellectual companionship that it soars above time and space and fickle fancy. Perhaps no companion of imagination has always so ready a welcome as Walter Scott.

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